

WHERE DO KIDS GO WHEN THEY FALL ASLEEP?

written by

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DRAFT 1

The screen is black, silent. Slowly, we hear the faint sound of footsteps pounding against the dirt, a whispering wind rising, crickets humming, and the rustle of leaves.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST PATH - NIGHT

Moonlight filters weakly through the trees, illuminating a narrow dirt path lined with thick, tangled bushes and towering shadows. The scene feels quiet, too quiet, until-

FOOTSTEPS.

LEO (16), drenched in sweat and panting, bolts down the path. His eyes are wide with fear, his gaze flicking over his shoulder. Branches and thorny bushes scratch against his arms and face as he stumbles but catches himself, pushing forward, desperate to escape.

The sound of DRAGGING, metallic and sharp, echoes from behind him.

CUT TO:

Behind Leo, a dark **FIGURE** follows, barely visible in the shadows. The figure moves unnaturally, limbs jerking and shifting as it advances, almost gliding over the ground.

CUT TO:

CLOSE-UP ON LEO

Leo's face is twisted in terror. He tries to muffle his breaths, his chest heaving as he fights to stay quiet.

BACK TO SCENE

Leo glances back, his footsteps loud in the night, and catches sight of the figure—closer now, nearly within reach. The figure's face is hidden, its shadow stretching grotesquely across the path, blending into the darkness around it.

Leo veers off the main path, crashing through the bushes, thorns tearing at his clothes and skin. He stumbles but pushes himself up, his breaths coming in short, panicked gasps. He thinks he's gaining distance.

Suddenly, silence.

Leo stops, looking around, struggling to calm his breathing. The sound of the metallic drag is gone. He blinks, looking back toward the path, feeling a faint glimmer of hope.

And then—

The figure appears directly in front of him.

Leo freezes, his face pale, as the figure raises a long, glinting object, its edge catching the moonlight in a sickly shimmer.

Leo tries to move, tries to scream, but he's frozen, his body refusing to respond. He can only stare as the figure raises the object higher, preparing to bring it down.

In a final, desperate move, Leo squeezes his eyes shut, bracing for the blow—

CUT TO:

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leo jolts upright in his bed, gasping for air, drenched in sweat. His wide eyes scan the room, his hands clutching the blanket as he tries to steady his breathing. The room is dark, lit only by the faint glow of the moonlight slipping in through the blinds.

He glances at the clock beside his bed. It reads **3:33 AM**.

Leo rubs his eyes, breathing slowly as he tries to shake off the lingering sense of dread. But the shadowy figure from his dream still feels close, as if it's hiding in the corners of his room, waiting.

Leo's gaze shifts uneasily to his open closet door. For a moment, he's sure he sees something—a shadow, just like in his dream, lurking inside.

He reaches out to his bedside lamp, fumbling to switch it on. Finally, the light clicks on, flooding the room with a warm, safe glow.

LEO
(whispers to himself)
It was just a dream... just a
dream.

He takes a deep breath, staring at the closet, daring it to show him something—anything.

After a long moment, he leans back, lying down, but keeps his eyes open, watching the shadows in his room as the clock ticks softly.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: WHERE DO KIDS GO WHEN THEY FALL ASLEEP

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Sunlight streams through the window, painting the room in soft, warm colors. Leo lies in bed, still wide awake, staring at the ceiling. His eyes are tired and red-rimmed, evidence of a sleepless night. Downstairs, we hear faint sounds of activity – the murmur of conversation, dishes clinking.

Leo finally sits up, rubbing his eyes. He swings his legs over the side of the bed, taking one last look at the now-innocent-looking closet. After a beat, he stands up and heads downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

In the kitchen, LEO'S MOM is bustling around, making breakfast. She looks up as Leo enters.

LEO'S MOM
(cheerfully)
Morning, sleepyhead. Didn't think
you'd be up this early.

Leo mumbles something unintelligible and grabs a glass of water, taking a long sip.

LEO'S MOM (CONT'D)
You okay? You look like you've seen
a ghost.

LEO
(hesitates, choosing his
words carefully)
Just... rough night.

LEO'S MOM
(smiling gently)
You and your nightmares. Honestly,
I don't know what you get up to in
that head of yours.

She tousles his hair playfully, but Leo doesn't smile back. He's lost in thought, replaying fragments of the dream: the shadowed figure, the sharp object, the way he'd felt so helpless.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Later that morning, Leo walks through the crowded school hallway, yawning. His best friend, CHRIS (a bright-eyed boy with an infectious grin), notices him from a locker nearby.

CHRIS

Yo, Leo! You look like you barely slept, man. What happened?

LEO

(shrugging)

Just another nightmare. Feels like I haven't had a good night's sleep in... forever.

They walk together down the hall as Chris grins, trying to lighten the mood.

CHRIS

Well, maybe it's 'cause you watch all those horror movies alone. It's messing with your head, dude.

LEO

(quietly, almost to himself)

No, this was different. It felt... real. Like I was actually there.

Chris raises an eyebrow, noticing the serious tone in Leo's voice.

CHRIS

What was it about?

LEO

It's hard to explain. I was in some... dark place. And there was someone following me. I could feel it, like... right behind me.

Chris shivers dramatically, trying to make light of it.

CHRIS

Creepy. Well, maybe tonight will be better. Just try to chill out before bed. No ghost stories, okay?

Leo forces a smile, but his mind drifts back to the shadows and the feeling of someone watching him. He nods, trying to shake it off.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Leo sits in class, staring out the window, barely hearing the teacher's voice. As he zones out, he glances across the room and notices another student, AMANDA (12, shy and quiet, with dark circles under her eyes), rubbing her temples, looking exhausted.

Their eyes meet for a moment. Amanda looks away quickly, as if embarrassed, but there's a flicker of recognition in her gaze – like she knows exactly what he's going through.

TEACHER

Leo? Would you like to share your thoughts with the class?

The question snaps Leo out of his trance. His classmates snicker, and he blushes, mumbling an apology.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LUNCH BREAK

Leo finds Amanda sitting alone at lunch, poking at her food. He hesitates, then walks over.

LEO

Hey, Amanda, right?

She looks up, surprised that he approached her.

AMANDA

Yeah... hi.

LEO

This is gonna sound weird, but... have you been having nightmares?

Amanda's face pales slightly, her fork clattering against her plate.

AMANDA

(whispering)
You too?

LEO

(nodding)
Yeah. It started a few nights ago. It's like... I'm trapped in this other world. And someone's after me.

Amanda shivers, glancing around as if someone might overhear.

AMANDA

I've been having the same dream.
It's always dark, and there's... this
person. I can't see their face, but
I feel them watching me.

Leo stares at her, his pulse quickening. He thought it was
just a strange nightmare, but now...

LEO

Do you... ever feel like it's real?
Like you're actually there?

Amanda's eyes fill with a flicker of fear.

AMANDA

Yes. Every time.

They sit in tense silence, sharing an unspoken understanding:
they're not alone in their nightmares. And whatever is
happening, it's more than just dreams.

FADE OUT.

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leo sits cross-legged on his bed, a notebook open in front of
him. His room is dimly lit by a small desk lamp, casting
shadows across the walls. He writes "NIGHTMARES" at the top
of the page, underlining it. His hand pauses, hovering above
the notebook, as he thinks.

He writes down what he remembers from the dream: "dark
figure," "forest," "3:33 AM." The pen hovers again before he
adds, "Amanda has them too."

Leo's phone buzzes, and he looks down to see a message from
Amanda.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE:

AMANDA: "Can't sleep. It feels like I'm being watched. You?"

LEO: "Same here. I feel like... if I fall asleep, I'll end up
back there."

There's a pause, and then another message from Amanda.

AMANDA: "Do you think it's... real?"

Leo stares at the message, hesitating. He types back:

LEO: "I don't know. But I'm starting to think we need to
figure this out."

As he sends the message, a cold breeze drifts through his room, making him shiver. He looks toward the window and realizes it's closed. The shadows in his room seem to deepen, stretching toward him.

He glances back at the clock: 2:59 AM.

He sits there, tense, his eyes fixed on the clock as it ticks forward. 3:00... 3:01...

FADE TO:

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

The next day, Leo and Amanda sit together at a table in the back corner of the library, surrounded by stacks of books about dreams, sleep disorders, and folklore. They flip through the pages, looking for any clues.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I found something. Look.

She slides a book toward Leo. The page has a faded illustration of a shadowy figure with elongated limbs, looming over a bed.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
It's called the "Night Wanderer."
Some people believe it's a spirit
that feeds on the energy of
children through their dreams.

LEO
(reading aloud)
"They appear at night, luring
children into a dream realm where
they slowly drain their life force...
victims often feel exhausted, as if
they haven't slept at all."

Leo looks up, feeling a chill.

LEO (CONT'D)
So, this thing is... real?

AMANDA
Maybe. But why us?

LEO
I don't know. But we have to find a
way to stop it before it... before
it does something worse.

They look at each other, realizing the weight of what they're facing.

CUT TO:

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leo sets up his phone camera on a tripod beside his bed, aiming it at himself. He checks the time: 11:50 PM.

He lies down, staring at the ceiling, his mind racing. After a moment, he reaches over and turns off the lamp, leaving the room bathed in darkness.

MONTAGE:

12:30 AM: Leo shifts in bed, restless, unable to fully fall asleep.

2:00 AM: Leo is finally asleep, his breathing slow and steady. Shadows in the room seem to shift and stretch, creeping toward his bed.

3:30 AM: The phone camera catches faint movement, a shadow flickering across the room, moving closer to Leo.

3:33 AM: Leo's face tenses in his sleep, a cold sweat forming on his brow. Suddenly, his body jerks, and his eyes fly open. *Leo gasps, sitting up. He grabs his phone, watching the footage with a growing sense of dread. He rewinds to the exact moment the shadow moves toward him.*

INSERT PHONE FOOTAGE:

In the dim video, Leo's sleeping form is barely visible. Then, a dark shape slowly emerges from the corner, inching closer until it's right beside him. The shape reaches out with a distorted hand, almost touching Leo's face.

Leo stares at the screen, horrified. He rewinds the footage, watching it again and again, unable to believe what he's seeing.

LEO (CONT'D)
(whispering to himself)
It's real..

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - NEXT DAY

Leo finds Amanda at her locker, looking pale and worn out.

LEO (CONT'D)

Amanda. It's real. I recorded it last night.

She looks at him, fear flickering in her eyes.

AMANDA

(nervously)

I felt it too. I thought I saw... someone in my room. But when I looked, there was no one there.

LEO

We need a plan. We need to find a way to stay awake.

AMANDA

(voice shaking)

But we can't stay awake forever, Leo.

They stand in the crowded hallway, feeling more isolated than ever. The bell rings, and students pass by, but Leo and Amanda are lost in their own world of fear and desperation.

FADE OUT.

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leo and Amanda sit cross-legged on the floor, a stash of energy drinks, coffee, and candy scattered between them. The clock reads 11:45 PM. Both look tense but determined.

LEO

Okay. If we don't sleep, it can't get to us. We'll stay up as long as we can, take shifts if we have to.

AMANDA

(sipping coffee nervously)

How long do you think we can keep this up?

LEO

(avoiding the question)

Long enough to figure something out.

They share a look, unspoken understanding passing between them. Amanda grabs an energy drink, cracking it open and taking a long gulp. The room falls into an uneasy silence as they brace themselves for the long night.

MONTAGE:

12:30 AM: They're wide awake, chatting and laughing nervously, trying to distract themselves.

1:15 AM: Leo is telling a story, but his voice becomes muffled in Amanda's ears as her eyelids begin to droop. She shakes herself awake, blinking rapidly.

2:30 AM: Both start to show signs of exhaustion, fidgeting, rubbing their eyes, but they keep drinking coffee and trying to stay alert.

3:00 AM:

Leo is in mid-sentence when Amanda's eyes start to close.

LEO (CONT'D)
Amanda? Amanda!

Amanda jolts awake, blinking rapidly, her face pale.

AMANDA
I... I was just... I thought I saw...

Leo looks at her with concern, noticing her hand trembling slightly.

LEO
We can't let it get to us. We have to stay awake.

Amanda nods, but there's a haunted look in her eyes. She glances around the room, as if expecting the shadow to be lurking in the corners.

CUT TO:

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The clock reads 3:25 AM. Leo and Amanda sit in silence, both struggling to stay awake. Suddenly, the room seems to get colder. Leo shivers, looking around uneasily.

They both hear a faint whisper.

VOICE
(whispering)
Sleep... come back...

Leo and Amanda exchange a horrified glance.

AMANDA
Did you hear that?

Before he can answer, the shadow appears in the corner of the room, flickering in and out of sight.

LEO
(whispering, panicked)
It's here.

They scramble back, pressing themselves against the wall, watching as the shadow figure slowly emerges, its face hidden in darkness, its long, twisted limbs stretching toward them.

The figure's hand reaches toward Amanda, a low, chilling voice filling the room.

SHADOW FIGURE
(whispering)
You can't escape... you belong to me.

LEO
No! We're not going with you!

The shadow's hand freezes, retracting slightly, as if surprised. But it doesn't disappear.

Suddenly, Amanda's head starts to droop. Her eyes flutter as if fighting to stay awake. Leo shakes her, his voice frantic.

LEO (CONT'D)
Amanda, wake up! Don't fall asleep!

AMANDA
(mumbling)
I'm... so... tired...

The shadow figure leans closer to Amanda, a grin visible in the darkness.

Leo looks around, desperate. He spots his phone on the bed and quickly grabs it, shining the flashlight directly into the shadow's face. The figure recoils, hissing, and its form becomes distorted, like smoke dispersing.

SHADOW FIGURE
(in a low, venomous
whisper)
This won't keep you safe forever...

The figure dissolves, leaving only darkness behind. Leo and Amanda sit there, breathing heavily, still clutching each other.

FADE TO:

INT. SCHOOL LIBRARY - DAY

The next day, Leo and Amanda are back in the library, looking drained and exhausted. They sift through books frantically, desperate for answers. They come across a worn, old book labeled *Dreamscapes and Night Terrors*.

Flipping through, they find a chapter on "Nightmare Entities" and a section specifically about "The Wanderer."

LEO

(reading)

"The Wanderer can be warded off by light, but it will continue to pursue its victims until it drains their life force... unless the victim severs the connection by conquering their fear."

AMANDA

(confused)

"Conquer their fear"? What does that even mean?

Leo closes the book, a sense of dread weighing on him.

LEO

I think... we have to face it. Stop running in the dream and confront it.

AMANDA

(nervously)

And what if we don't make it?

LEO

(determined)

Then we'll just be running forever.

They sit in silence, knowing the next night will be the biggest test of their lives.

FADE OUT.

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Leo and Amanda stand together in the middle of Leo's bedroom, the room once again dimly lit. The clock shows 11:45 PM. The air feels thick with anticipation. Leo checks the time on his phone, his finger trembling as he slides the screen open. He looks at Amanda, her face pale but resolute.

LEO (CONT'D)

(softly)

Tonight, we end this. We can't keep running forever.

AMANDA
 (nodding)
 I'm ready. But... how do we even
 fight it?

Leo looks down at the book they found earlier, flipping through its pages. He stops at a section titled "Confronting the Night Wanderer." He reads aloud quietly.

LEO
 (reading)
 "It's not enough to run or hide. To
 defeat the Wanderer, you must stand
 your ground. Confront the fear it
 brings and show it you are not
 afraid of its darkness."

Amanda swallows hard, her hands shaking as she clenches them into fists.

AMANDA
 And if we can't do that?

LEO
 Then we face whatever happens.
 Together.

The words linger in the air as the clock strikes midnight. The room grows colder, and the darkness seems to thicken, slowly creeping in.

CUT TO:

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

The two sit across from each other on the floor, each holding a small flashlight. They sit in silence, waiting for the inevitable. The shadows grow long, twisting at the corners of the room, almost alive. The atmosphere is heavy, suffocating, and neither of them dares to speak.

Suddenly, the room temperature drops sharply. A whisper fills the room, low and sinister.

SHADOW FIGURE
 (whispering))
 You cannot win...

The figure manifests in the corner of the room, its form shifting in and out of focus, like smoke swirling around a faint outline of a human shape. Its eyes gleam faintly through the darkness, but its face remains hidden.

LEO
(standing, voice trembling
but resolute)
We're not afraid of you.

AMANDA
(standing next to Leo)
We won't let you control us
anymore.

The shadow flickers, swirling around them, growing larger and more menacing.

SHADOW FIGURE
(with a twisted smile)
You think you can defeat me? You
are nothing.

The figure lunges toward them, its hands reaching for their throats. Leo and Amanda scramble backward, but they hold their ground. Leo raises his flashlight, shining it directly at the figure.

LEO
(shouting)
We're not afraid! We're not weak
anymore!

The flashlight beam cuts through the darkness, illuminating the shadowy form. The figure screeches as the light hits it, its shape warping violently. It recoils, fading in and out as if the light is burning it.

SHADOW FIGURE
(hissing)
You cannot escape your fear...

Amanda steps forward, holding her own flashlight tightly.

AMANDA
(shouting)
We are not afraid of you!

The two flashlights shine in unison, the combined light becoming stronger, brighter. The shadow wavers, losing its grip on the room. The walls seem to pulse with light, flickering in time with the shadow's fading presence.

The shadow screams in fury as it slowly dissipates, its form breaking apart into wisps of smoke that vanish into the air. The room, once filled with cold, dark dread, now feels warm again.

Leo and Amanda collapse to the floor, breathing heavily, exhausted but relieved. They share a look, eyes wide with disbelief, but also a quiet sense of victory.

LEO
(breathing hard)
Did we...?

AMANDA
(nodding, eyes wide)
I think... I think we did.

They sit there for a moment, both processing what just happened. The air feels lighter now, the oppressive weight lifted from the room. Slowly, they stand up, glancing around to make sure the danger has truly passed.

LEO
(quietly, almost to himself)
It's over.

Amanda looks at him, her face softening.

AMANDA
We made it through. Together.

LEO
(smiling weakly)
Yeah... together.

They look around the room one last time, unsure if the shadow will return, but knowing they've faced their fears – and survived.

FADE OUT.

INT. LEO'S BEDROOM - MORNING

The morning sun pours through the window, casting a warm, golden light over the room. The once-dim and chilling atmosphere now feels comforting, almost peaceful. Leo and Amanda sit on the floor, surrounded by the remnants of their makeshift defense: empty energy drink cans, discarded coffee cups, and two still-glowing flashlights. They both look worn out but strangely at peace.

LEO (CONT'D)
(rubbing his eyes)
I can't believe it's finally over.
It's like the night... never even happened.

AMANDA

(exhaling deeply)

Yeah... it's like we woke up from a nightmare. But... what if it comes back?

Leo looks out the window, watching the sunlight illuminate the neighborhood outside. It's a stark contrast to the darkness they fought just hours ago.

LEO

(quietly)

I don't know. But we stopped it. For now.

Amanda looks at Leo, her expression thoughtful, as if she's still processing everything.

AMANDA

Do you think we really faced our fear? I mean, we didn't... see it, not really. Not fully. We only saw pieces of it.

Leo turns toward her, his eyes serious.

LEO

It doesn't matter. We faced it together. That's what matters.

They share a brief, but meaningful glance. There's a quiet understanding between them, something deeper than fear — a bond forged in the darkest of times.

Suddenly, the phone on Leo's desk buzzes, breaking the silence. Leo looks at it, seeing a message from an unknown number. He picks it up slowly, warily.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE

UNKNOWN NUMBER: *"You may have won for now, but I will be back. This isn't over. It's never over."*

Leo's face pales as he reads the message aloud. Amanda's eyes widen in shock.

AMANDA

(nervously)

What the hell is that?

LEO

(gripping the phone tightly)

(MORE)

LEO (CONT'D)
 It's the Wanderer. It's telling us
 it's not done.

The room grows colder, the peaceful morning suddenly feeling heavy again. A low, almost imperceptible whisper fills the air, making both of them tense.

SHADOW FIGURE
 (whispering, faint)
 You can't run forever. You'll never
 be free.

They both freeze, looking around in panic. The whisper fades, but the unease remains. Leo's fingers tremble as he types a reply, the weight of the message settling over him.

LEO (typing): *"We're ready for whatever comes next."*

He hits send. Silence follows, and for a moment, it seems like nothing happens. But then, the phone buzzes again.

INSERT TEXT MESSAGE

UNKNOWN NUMBER: *"We'll see about that."*

Leo stares at the message for a moment, his heart pounding. He turns to Amanda, a mix of determination and fear in his eyes.

LEO
 (softly)
 It's not over. But we're not giving
 up. Not now. Not ever.

AMANDA
 (nodding firmly)
 No matter what it takes.

They exchange a look — one of mutual resolve. The battle may not be over, but they've come out stronger. And they will face whatever comes next, together.

FADE OUT.