



Nightmares! The Sleepwalker Tonic

By Jason Segel, Kirsten Miller

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Nightmares! The Sleepwalker Tonic is the sequel to the hilariously scary *New York Times* bestselling novel *Nightmares!* by multitalented actor Jason Segel and bestselling author Kirsten Miller. You thought the nightmares were over? You better keep the lights on!

Charlie Laird has a dream life.

- 1) He has a weirdo stepmom who runs an herbarium.
- 2) He lives in a purple mansion with a portal to the Netherworld.
- 3) Since they escaped from the Netherworld, he and his best friends have been sleeping like babies.

But Charlie can't shake the feeling that something strange is afoot. Charlotte's herbarium used to be one of the busiest stores in Cypress Creek. Now her loyal following is heading to Orville Falls for their herbal potions.

Weirder, though, Orville Falls is suddenly filled with . . . *zombies*? At least, they sure *look* like the walking dead. Rumor has it that no one's sleeping in Orville Falls. And Charlie knows what that means.

Things are getting freaky again.

Praise for the *Nightmares!* Series

"Charlie Laird, who learns fear will eat you alive if you feed it, makes an impression, and...**readers will want to accompany him again.**"—*The New York Times Book Review*

"A touching comical saga...about facing things that go bump in the night."—*US Weekly*

"Coraline meets Monsters, Inc. in this delightfully entertaining offering from actor [Jason] Segel and co-author [Kirsten] Miller."—*Publishers Weekly*

"Comical antics, cartoonish spot illustrations, and creepy villains make for quite an entertaining read."—*Booklist*

"Succeeds at scaring and amusing in equal measure . . . **Sweet, charming, and imaginative.**"—*Kirkus Reviews*

"An engaging and creative story...woven with a generous amount [of] humor."—*VOYA*

"There's **humor and a fairly high ick-factor.**"—*School Library Journal*

"Cleverly crafted...This novel presents just the right mix of 'scary and humorous.'"—*ILA Literacy Daily*

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Editorial Review

Review

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About the Author

Jason Segel used to have nightmares just like Charlie, and just like Charlie, he's learned that the things we're most afraid of are the things that can make us strong...if we're brave enough to face them. Jason likes acting, writing, making music, and hanging out with his friends. Sometimes he writes movies. Sometimes he writes songs for movies. Sometimes he stars in those movies and sings those songs. You might know him from *The Muppets* and *Despicable Me*. Your parents might know him from other stuff. *Nightmares! The Sleepwalker Tonic* is his second novel. Look for the other two books in the *Nightmares!* series, *Nightmares!* and *Nightmares! The Lost Lullaby*, available from Delacorte Press.

Kirsten Miller grew up in a small town just like Cypress Creek, minus the purple mansion. She lives and writes in New York City. Kirsten is the author of the acclaimed Kiki Strike books, the *New York Times* bestseller *The Eternal Ones*, and *How to Lead a Life of Crime*. *Nightmares! The Sleepwalker Tonic* is the second novel she's written with Jason Segel. You can visit her at kirstenmillerbooks.com or follow @bankstirregular on Twitter.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Zombie from Orville Falls

“Hey, Charlie, I had the craziest dream last night,” Alfie Bluenthal said. “Want me to tell you about it?”

Ordinarily, Charlie Laird would have answered with a firm No! Over the past few months, he'd listened to a hundred of Alfie's dreams. They usually starred Albert Einstein, Neil deGrasse Tyson, or the local weatherwoman, and they seemed to go on forever. If they'd been nightmares, Charlie would have happily tuned in. Nightmares were his specialty, and he considered himself an expert on the subject. As far as Charlie was concerned, there was nothing more boring than someone else's good dreams. And kale. Good dreams and kale.

But Charlie happened to be in a generous mood. It was the first hot day of summer vacation, and he and Alfie were lounging on a bench outside the Cypress Creek ice cream shop. A triple-decker cone with scoops of rum raisin, mint chocolate chip, and bubble gum ice cream was slowly making its way into Charlie's belly. He had an hour to kill before he was due back at his summer job, and he couldn't have felt more content.

"Why not," he told Alfie. "Let's hear it."

As Alfie began to talk, Charlie sat back against the bench and let his gaze drift over the roof of the hardware store across the street--and up to the strange purple mansion that stood on a hill overlooking the town. Workmen on ladders had just finished painting the house, covering the dingy grape color with a fresh coat of lilac. At the top of the mansion, an octagonal tower rose into the sky. One of the tower's windows was open, and a kite in the shape of a pterodactyl was riding the breeze outside. The hand that held its string belonged to Charlie's little brother, Jack. The weird purple mansion was their home.

As Charlie listened to Alfie chattering away, he made a game of licking each drip of ice cream just before it reached the edge of his cone, and let Alfie's dream pass in one ear and out the other. A few random phrases managed to lodge themselves in his brain: cumulonimbus, El Niño, heat wave, high-pressure zone.

Just as Charlie popped the last bit of cone into his mouth, Alfie's dream finally reached its end.

"So what do you suppose it means?" Alfie asked.

"Same thing as every other dream you've had in the past three months," Charlie replied, still crunching on the cone. "It means you've got a crush on the weatherwoman from the Channel Four news."

"She's a meteorologist," Alfie corrected him, clearly offended that his epic dream had been reduced to a single sentence. "And she has a name, you know."

"Stormy Skies is not a real name," Charlie informed his friend.

"How can you say that?" Alfie pouted. Love had turned his once-impressive brain to mush. "Are you trying to tell me Stormy just made it up? I'd like to hear you say that to Mr. and Mrs. Skies!"

Charlie was searching for a way to break the truth gently, when his attention was drawn across the street by the slam of a car door. An odd-looking man had emerged from a beaten-up black SUV. Smoke was billowing from under the hood, and several of its windows were shattered. The man who'd emerged was tall, with messy dark hair. He might have passed for an average suburban dad in his polo shirt and jeans, but something was clearly wrong with the guy. He was shuffling down the sidewalk, his head bent so far to the side that it appeared to be resting on one of his shoulders. As his feet slid forward, the soles of his Crocs barely left the ground. And though Charlie was sitting too far away to tell for sure, he would have sworn that the man's eyes were shut.

Charlie nudged Alfie and pointed. “Check it out. What’s your diagnosis?”

Alfie adjusted his chunky black glasses and examined the man across the street. “Hmmm. Let’s see. Rigid limbs. Shambling gait. Shocking lack of personal hygiene. And a pretty painful-looking crick in the neck. All things considered, I’d say there’s a good chance he’s the walking dead.”

Charlie sat bolt upright on the edge of the bench. It had been months since he’d felt such a jolt of excitement. “You think that guy might be a zombie?”

Alfie cackled and licked his cone. “I’m joking. How could he be a zombie? The portal to the Netherworld is closed.” As soon as Alfie said it, the smile slid off his face, and he slowly turned to Charlie. “It is still closed, isn’t it?” he almost whispered.

“Of course it is,” Charlie assured him. “Why wouldn’t it be?”

That answer wasn’t good enough for either of them. Both boys went silent as their gazes turned to the house on the hill.

The purple mansion where Charlie lived wasn’t like the other houses in Cypress Creek. While the rest of the village was as cute as a pack of puppies, the mansion looked more like an enormous dragon perched on top of a rock. It had claimed its hill before Cypress Creek had been founded, and its occupants had been watching over the town ever since.

A man named Silas DeChant had built the mansion, and Charlie’s stepmother, Charlotte, was Silas’s great-great-granddaughter. For the past one hundred and fifty years, some member of the DeChant family had been in residence at the mansion. It was the family’s duty to protect the world from the house’s terrible secret.

That secret could be found in the small, eight-sided room at the top of the mansion’s tower. The special few who knew about the secret called it the portal. It was a door between the Waking World and the land of nightmares. Fortunately, not many people had ever heard of it. Most humans only visited the Netherworld when they fell asleep, and the terrifying creatures that dwelled there were supposed to stay there.

But the portal had been opened by accident twice in the past. Nightmares had snuck into Cypress Creek, and unspeakable things had come close to happening. If the portal ever opened again and Nightmares entered the Waking World, it would be up to the portal’s protectors to round up the creatures and get them back to the other side. For almost two centuries, a single person had always held the job. Now, for the first time, the portal had three guardians living in the purple mansion. Charlie Laird was one of them.

Back on the bench outside the ice cream shop, Charlie and Alfie watched as the zombielike man slammed through the door of the hardware store across the street.

“I should find out what’s going on,” Charlie said, his heart racing.

“I’m coming with you.” Alfie stuffed the rest of his cone into his mouth and tossed his napkin into the trash.

They made it to the store's plate-glass window in time to see the man slap a bill on the counter and then lurch toward the door, his arms laden with cans of paint.

"Hey, mister, don't forget your change!" the clerk called as the door swung open. The man shuffled out to the sidewalk, showing no sign that he'd heard.

Now the strange man was headed in the boys' direction. As the guy got closer, Charlie could see that his eyes were open--just barely. But there wasn't much life behind them. A thin stream of drool was trickling from a corner of his mouth. It fed the giant wet splotch that was growing on the front of his shirt, above a small insignia sewn onto his left shirt pocket. The logo looked like a flaming soccer ball.

Charlie and Alfie scuttled behind a parked car and ducked just seconds before the man passed by. A terrible odor trailed in the man's wake, and Charlie covered his face with his hand. Dead or alive, the guy hadn't bathed in a while.

Once the man had passed, Charlie let his breath out. "Did you get a look at the logo on his shirt?" Charlie whispered to Alfie. "I'm pretty sure I've seen it somewhere before."

Alfie squinted. "I can barely see anything. My eyes are still watering from the smell, and now my glasses are all fogged up. That man was .?.?. pungent. Any idea where you might have seen the logo?"

"Nope," Charlie admitted. He stepped out from behind the car. "It looks like we're just going to have to ask the guy where he's from."

"No way!" Alfie yelped as he wiped his glasses. "I'm not going to talk to that man!"

Charlie raised an eyebrow. "What's the problem, Bluenthal?" he asked. "You scared?"

The word scared had a magical effect on Alfie. It lifted him up and straightened out his spine. "Yes, I am," he replied without a hint of embarrassment. "Are you?"

"Terrified," Charlie confirmed. "And that's why we have to do it."

"I guess you're right." Alfie sighed, deflating. Their travels in the Netherworld had taught them a lot. The most important lesson, though, was to never run from a Nightmare creature. To make one go away, you had to face what scared you. If you tried to escape, the Nightmare would just feed off your fear. Soon it would start showing up in your dreams every night.

"Good," Charlie said. "Cause I don't think we want that guy paying us a visit after dark. Now hurry up, or we'll miss him." The man had almost reached his car.

"Excuse me!" Alfie called. "Sir!"

"Hey, you with the paint!" Charlie shouted. There was no time to be polite. The man grunted loudly in response but didn't turn around.

Charlie shot Alfie a worried look. It wasn't a good sign. Along with shuffling and drooling, grunting was classic zombie behavior.

“Can we interest you in a nice, juicy brain?” Alfie yelled.

“Mmmrumph?” The man’s head swiveled toward the boys while his legs kept walking. Suddenly he jerked to a stop and dropped the cans. Blue paint flew everywhere as the man’s knees buckled and he fell to the ground in a lifeless heap. A red gash was already forming across his forehead. He’d walked straight into a lamppost.

“Quick, call 911!” Charlie told Alfie as he ran toward the fallen man. When Charlie reached him, he dropped to his knees, took off the button-up he was wearing over his Hazel’s Herbarium work T-shirt, and prepared to press it against the man’s wound. But the expression on the man’s face made Charlie pause. Despite the blood, the guy looked strangely peaceful. He lay there with his eyes closed and a pleasant smile on his lips, as if he were enjoying a good night’s sleep.

Alfie squatted beside Charlie. “An ambulance is on the way,” he said. Then he noticed the man’s odd expression. “Wow, somebody really needed a nap.” Alfie took off his backpack and began searching for tools. “Now that he’s out, let’s have a look at our specimen.”

“The guy may be a zombie, but that doesn’t make him a science experiment,” Charlie cautioned his friend. “You’re not allowed to dissect him, Alfie.”

“You can’t dissect a person until he’s dead.” Alfie had fished a small flashlight out of his backpack. “I’m pretty sure this guy is still alive, so technically it would be vivisection. But don’t worry--no cutting.” He pried open one of the man’s eyelids and shined the flashlight’s beam into his eye. “Yep, pupillary reflex is good. Brain stem is working just fine.”

Charlie used his free hand to pluck the wallet out of the man’s pocket and pass it to his friend. “Thanks, Dr. Bluenthal. Now see if you can find some ID while I search the rest of him.”

Alfie rifled through the man’s bulging wallet and pulled out a blue-and-yellow card. “This guy really needs to organize his stuff. What the heck is Blockbuster Video?” After a few more attempts, he finally located a driver’s license. “Says here the guy’s name is Winston Lindsay. He’s forty-four. An organ donor. Lives at twenty-seven Newcomb Street in Orville Falls.”

“Orville Falls?” Charlie repeated incredulously. Orville Falls was a cute little town nestled in the mountains. It was about half an hour’s drive from Cypress Creek, though Charlie rarely visited. “He came all the way here to buy paint? Don’t they have a hardware store in Orville Falls?”

“Actually, they have two,” Alfie said.

Charlie looked at Alfie. Sometimes Charlie wondered if the kid really did know everything.

Alfie sighed. “Remember the summer my parents sent me to that horrible camp in Orville Falls? The counselors locked me up and forced me to do crafts. I had to sneak out just to borrow books from the library.”

“How could I forget,” Charlie said, grinning at the memory of the gifts Alfie had presented to his friends at the end of the ordeal. “I still have that macramé owl you made for me.”

They heard the wail of a siren in the distance. Within seconds, it had grown to a deafening pitch as an

ambulance screeched to a stop on Main Street and two EMTs in crisp blue uniforms leaped from the back.

“Afternoon,” said one in a booming voice fit for a superhero. “You the two kids who called this in?”

“Uh-huh,” grunted Alfie. For a moment, it seemed like all he could do was stare up at the EMT in awe. Then Charlie nudged him, and the science spilled out. “The subject is unconscious, but his pupillary reflex indicates--”

A second EMT pushed past Alfie and squatted beside Winston Lindsay. “Nice work stopping the bleeding,” she praised Charlie as she examined the man’s wound. “You boys in the Scouts or something?”

“No, ma’am,” said Charlie. He rarely used the word ma’am, but this was one of the few adults who actually seemed to warrant it.

Charlie saw Alfie’s spine stiffen. “I’m not a Boy Scout, but I do consider myself something of an amateur doctor,” Alfie said proudly. “I’ve studied all the major texts, and--”

“That’s great, little buddy,” the first EMT interrupted. Then he began to unload the stretcher while his partner examined the patient.

“Pupillary reflex appears to be fine,” the partner announced. “But looks like this dude’s going to be out for a while. We need to get him in ASAP.”

Alfie turned to Charlie and rolled his eyes. Charlie could imagine how annoyed his friend felt. It was hard enough being twelve years old; most adults barely listened to a word you said. Being a twelve-year-old genius had to be particularly frustrating.

The EMTs hoisted Winston Lindsay onto the stretcher, strapped him down, and loaded him into the back of the ambulance. Charlie and Alfie began to climb in after him.

“Afraid not, little men,” said one of the EMTs, pushing them away. “Only family members get to ride in the back.”

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melinda Kendall:

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The guide *Nightmares! The Sleepwalker Tonic* is the guide that recommended to you to read. You can see the quality of the reserve content that will be shown to you actually. The language that article author

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