

# DON'T KILL BILL

JUST CHILL



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## Introduction: The Shadows at Dawn

In the suffocating quiet of the predawn hours, when the world is a silhouette of shadows and whispers, Bill's little room on Cherry Street feels like the epicenter of an unseen storm. At only nine years old, his thin, quivering form is a stark contrast to the sprawling, tangled sheets and the mountain of stuffed animals that are meant to be his sentinels against the night.

Tonight, like many nights before, the air feels denser, as if soaked in anticipation. Bill lies awake, his wide eyes tracing the familiar shapes of his room bathed in the ghostly glow of a nightlight. The light casts long, gnarled shadows across the walls—shadows that twist and turn as if breathing, stretching slowly towards his small bed.

Suddenly, the room grows colder, a chill that seeps into Bill's bones, making him pull the covers tighter around his body. His breath quickens, clouding the air in faint, trembling wisps. He tries to move, to escape the tightening grip of dread that binds him, but his limbs are leaden, unresponsive. He is a prisoner in his own body, caught in the limbo of sleep paralysis.

From the darkest corner of the room, where the light does not reach, a whisper cuts through the silence. It is a voice both strange and familiar, a sinister hiss that coils around his heart. "Bill," it breathes, a sound more felt than heard, as if drawn from the depths of a long-forgotten well.

Panicked, Bill's gaze darts around the room, searching for the source, but his eyes catch only the lingering dance of shadows. He wants to scream, to call out to his mother, who is just down the hall, but his voice is trapped, swallowed by the heavy blanket of fear.

Just when the shadows seem to converge upon him, another voice pierces the gloom, clear and commanding, a stark contrast to the malevolent whisper. "Don't kill Bill, just chill," it says firmly, a mantra that has become a lifeline in these terrifying moments. It is his mother's voice, a beacon in the dark, her words woven with a warmth that seems to push the shadows back, forcing them to recoil to the corners of the room.

Bill clings to the words, repeating them in his head like a sacred incantation. Slowly, the icy grip of fear loosens. His body relaxes as the paralysis fades, chased away by the rising sun that now peeks through his window, scattering the last of the shadows. Bill's breathing evens out, and his eyes flutter closed, the terror of the night giving way to the promise of dawn.

But as sleep claims him once more, the edge of his consciousness wonders if the safety brought by the light is just an illusion, a brief respite in an ongoing battle he is only beginning to understand. The day ahead will be normal—breakfast, school, friends—all mundane under the sun. Yet, as night approaches, the cycle will repeat, and Bill will once again face the shadows at dawn.

## Chapter 1: Echoes of the Night

The morning light, though bright and clear, did little to wash away the remnants of night's terror that clung to Bill's mind. As he made his way to the kitchen, each step felt heavier, each shadow cast by the rising sun seemed to whisper secrets. The familiar sounds of breakfast being prepared should have comforted him, yet today they sounded distant, as if echoing through a long, dark tunnel. His mother, Helen, stood by the stove, her movements mechanical and her humming tune slightly off-key. It was a tune Bill couldn't place, something hauntingly familiar yet altogether foreign. As she flipped pancakes, her eyes occasionally darted to the dark corners of the kitchen, as if she expected to find something lurking there.

"Morning, sleepyhead," she said without turning, her voice tinged with a forced cheerfulness that didn't quite reach her eyes. When she finally looked at him, her smile seemed to falter for a moment, as if she was wearing it like a mask. "Did you sleep well?"

Bill nodded, not trusting his voice to hide his fear. He knew his mother worried about his night terrors, but her explanations—too much TV, a vivid imagination—felt increasingly hollow. Deep down, Bill felt these weren't just nightmares; they were warnings. As he picked at his breakfast, the air between them filled with unspoken words. Helen kept glancing at him, her eyes sharp and calculating, as if trying to read his thoughts. Every so often, she would repeat that odd tune under her breath, the melody sending chills down Bill's spine.

Later, as they walked to the bus stop, Helen's grip on his hand was unusually tight, her nails slightly digging into his skin. "Remember, Bill," she said as the bus rolled up, her eyes scanning the horizon as if she expected the shadows to materialize there. "If you ever get scared at night, just tell yourself, 'Don't kill Bill, just chill.' It's just a dream, nothing can hurt you."

The words, meant to comfort, now sounded like a warning—or a threat. Bill nodded, unable to shake the feeling that his mother knew more about the darkness than she let on.

Stepping onto the bus, Bill felt a wave of relief as he moved away from her intense gaze. Her mantra echoed in his head, not as a shield but as a puzzle he was yet to solve. The bus pulled away, and he watched her figure grow smaller, her presence at the bus stop lingering like a sentinel. School provided a temporary escape, a place of light and noise where shadows were merely shadows, nothing more. But as dusk approached, the dread returned, seeping into his thoughts like a cold mist. That night, as Helen tucked him in, her demeanor was pensive, her eyes wandering around the room, lingering in the dark corners. She leaned in close, her breath cold as she whispered, "Sleep tight, don't let the bedbugs bite. And remember—"

"Don't kill Bill, just chill," Bill finished, the words now heavy with uncertainty.

She kissed his forehead, her lips unnaturally cold, and left the room, closing the door with a soft click that sounded final. Bill lay in the growing darkness, the mantra circling in his mind, a cryptic echo of his mother's strange behavior. As sleep claimed him, the shadows whispered back, their voices merging with his mother's tune, a lullaby that felt more like a spell.

## Chapter 2: The Dream Begins

Bill's eyes fluttered open, not to the familiar shadows of his childhood bedroom, but to a stark, sunlit dorm room, lined with books and papers scattered across a small desk. He sat up, blinking in confusion. The room was his, yet not his—an older, more mature version of his living space, filled with textbooks on neuroscience and psychology, posters of the brain's labyrinthine pathways, and notes scribbled with terms like "lucid dreaming" and "astral projection." As he gathered his bearings, the last wisps of his mother's eerie lullaby faded into the background, replaced by the distant sounds of campus life outside his window. He was no longer a frightened child; he was a college student, apparently well-versed in the mysteries of the human mind. The transition was seamless yet disorienting, as if part of him always knew this life awaited. Bill rose and approached the desk, his eyes catching on a particular set of notes about astral projection. It seemed he had been conducting experiments, using himself as the subject. The notes detailed methods to induce sleep paralysis deliberately to facilitate a separation of consciousness from the physical body. According to his own handwriting, he had been successful multiple times.

Fuelled by a mix of curiosity and dread, Bill decided to continue the experiment. If this was a dream, as he suspected, perhaps he could control it, learn from it. He lay back down, following the steps he had written down: relax, breathe, focus on the mind's eye, and visualize the astral body lifting away from the physical. As he slipped into a trance-like state, the world around him began to dissolve. A weightless sensation took over, and soon, Bill found himself floating upwards, the dorm room below him growing smaller as he rose through the ceiling into the open sky. The campus sprawled beneath him, a tapestry of buildings and green spaces, alive with the vibrant energy of student life. But as he ventured further, the sky darkened, and a chilling wind swept through the astral plane. Bill navigated through this new realm with a mixture of awe and fear, fully aware of the vastness and the unknown dangers lurking within it. He encountered other entities—some appeared curious, drifting past him like distant stars, while others watched him with an unsettling focus. It wasn't long before he felt a presence that filled him with an icy dread. A shadowy figure approached, its features blurred but its intent clear. Bill remembered the notes warning about such entities—beings that thrived in the astral realm, drawn to the energy of human souls. He tried to evade it, but the entity matched his every move with a terrifying precision.

As panic set in, Bill's mind grasped for anything familiar, anything comforting. Instinctively, he whispered, "Don't kill Bill, just chill," the mantra echoing strangely in the vastness of the astral space. Surprisingly, the entity paused, its advance slowing as if confused or curious about the words. Seizing the moment, Bill willed himself to return to his body, feeling the magnetic pull of the physical world. The return journey was a blur of colors and sensations, a rush of wind and whispering voices, until he jolted awake in the dorm room, his heart pounding, his body drenched in sweat. He sat up, gasping for air, the notes on his desk a stark reminder of the reality—or unreality—he had just experienced. Was it all just a dream within a dream? Or had he truly touched something beyond the known world? Bill knew he needed to understand more, to explore further. But first, he needed to ensure he could return safely, every time, before venturing deeper into the astral realm.

### Chapter 3: The Astral Gate

The sensation of waking from the dream within a dream left Bill disoriented but intensely curious. The academic side of him, though part of a dream, had been meticulous in documenting the experiences and theories surrounding astral projection. He felt compelled to continue the exploration, driven by both the thrill of discovery and the need to confront his fears. Throughout the week, Bill carefully prepared for his nightly journeys. He refined his technique, practiced meditation, and read everything he could find on protective measures against malevolent astral entities. His dorm room became a sanctuary of sorts, a place where he could experiment safely within the confines of his mind.

One crisp autumn evening, as the shadows lengthened and the world quieted, Bill felt ready to push further than before. He lay on his bed, his body relaxed, his mind focused and clear. The mantra, "Don't kill Bill, just chill," played softly in his thoughts, a grounding spell that he hoped would shield him from harm. As he slipped into the state of sleep paralysis, Bill visualized the astral gate, a luminescent archway he imagined as his portal to the astral plane. The gate shimmered against the backdrop of the darkening sky, beckoning him forward. With a mental push, he left his physical body behind, drifting upwards and through the archway with an ease that surprised him. The astral plane unfolded before him, a vast expanse of twilight that stretched infinitely. The stars above seemed brighter here, the cosmos alive with a pulse of its own. Bill moved through this space with a sense of purpose, marveling at the freedom and the surreal beauty around him. However, the tranquility of the journey was short-lived. The familiar sense of dread soon crept in, a reminder that this realm was not without its perils. From the corner of his eye, Bill saw it—the dark figure from before, its form more defined now, a sinister silhouette against the starlit sky.

This time, Bill was better prepared. He recalled the protective techniques he had studied: envisioning a circle of light around him, a barrier powered by his will and the mantra that kept him safe. "Don't kill Bill, just chill," he repeated, the words forming a protective shield that glowed with a soft, golden light. The entity paused at the edge of the light, its form blurring and reshaping, as if trying to find a way through the barrier. Bill could feel its malevolence, a cold intent that sent shivers down his spine. Yet, the circle held firm, the mantra a powerful ward against the darkness.

Encouraged by this defense, Bill decided to confront the entity. "Why do you follow me?" he asked, his voice echoing in the astral void. The figure remained silent, its black eyes piercing him with an unreadable expression. Then, as quickly as it had appeared, it dissipated like smoke, leaving Bill alone under the celestial dome. Shaken yet exhilarated by the encounter, Bill realized that understanding these entities might be the key to mastering his fears. He needed to learn more about what they were, why they seemed drawn to him, and what power his mantra held over them. With a thought, Bill returned through the astral gate, his spirit rejoining his body with a gentle jolt. He awoke in his bed, the morning light creeping through the curtains, a new day with new questions awaiting him. But one thing was clear: he had crossed a threshold, and there was no turning back.

## Chapter 4: The Whispering Void

With each night that passed, Bill's journey into the astral plane grew more profound and more harrowing. He began to encounter not only malevolent entities but also echoes of voices that seemed hauntingly familiar, voices that whispered secrets about his past and cryptic warnings about his future. As the line between his dream state and waking life began to blur, Bill found it increasingly difficult to focus on his daily activities. His classes, once a place of solace and intellectual curiosity, now felt trivial and disconnected from the stark realities he faced each night. His friends noticed his growing distraction and dark circles under his eyes but chalked it up to overstudying or typical college stress.

One evening, as Bill sat alone in his dorm room, poring over his astral projection notes, he stumbled upon an old journal entry that mentioned his mother's unusual interest in mysticism and the occult. The entry was vague but suggestive enough to spark a chilling possibility in his mind. Could his mother's strange behaviors and her cryptic mantra, "Don't kill Bill, just chill," be linked to the astral realm? Determined to find answers, Bill decided to push further into the astral plane that night. He prepared his room, setting up protective symbols and reciting the mantra to fortify his mental barriers. As he drifted into the familiar weightless state, he focused his intention on uncovering the truth about his mother.

The astral landscape that night was tumultuous, reflecting his inner turmoil. The stars seemed dim, and the darkness more oppressive, as if sensing his intent. Bill navigated through the swirling mists, calling out to the spirits for guidance. Suddenly, a figure emerged from the void—not the dark entity he had encountered before, but a softer, more sorrowful spirit that bore a striking resemblance to his mother. Bill's heart raced as the figure approached, its movements slow and deliberate.

"Why do you haunt my dreams?" Bill asked, his voice steady despite his pounding heart. The spirit paused, and in a voice that was both eerie and tender, it replied, "Not to haunt, but to warn. The path you tread is perilous, entwined with your own essence."

Bill struggled to understand, pressing for more clarity. "What danger? What does it have to do with you?"

"The astral plane is not just a realm of spirits but of deep, unresolved emotions. Your journey here began long before you knew, woven by fates that tie back to your birth," the spirit murmured, fading into the mists before it could provide any further explanation.

Shaken, Bill forced himself back to his body, awakening in a cold sweat. The encounter left him with more questions than answers, thrusting him into a deeper investigation of his family's past. The days that followed were consumed with digging through old family records, searching for any clues that might illuminate his mother's secret life and its possible connections to the astral dangers he now faced. Each piece of the puzzle that fell into place revealed a tapestry of secrets that had been hidden from Bill for years. And as he delved deeper, the shadows that whispered in the night grew louder, as if provoked by his quest for truth.

## Chapter 5: Tethered Realities

Bill's relentless pursuit of the truth about his mother's past led him to a dusty attic filled with old photographs, letters, and a collection of esoteric books that smelled of mildew and secrets. Among the scattered memories, Bill found a faded journal belonging to his mother, Helen. Its pages were filled with her elegant script, detailing her own experiences with astral projection and her fears of something she had inadvertently awakened. As Bill leafed through the journal under the dim light of the attic, the air around him seemed to thicken. Helen's words painted a picture of a young woman caught in the throes of mystical exploration, a journey that started with curiosity and ended in dread. She wrote of a "threshold guardian," a presence in the astral plane that had begun to manifest in her waking life, threatening to tear through the veil that separated the worlds.

Armed with this new knowledge, Bill felt a mix of vindication and horror. His mother's experiences mirrored his own, suggesting that his encounters were not just random manifestations but were inherited, passed down through a lineage cursed with too much insight into the otherworldly realms.

Determined to protect himself and possibly break the cycle, Bill prepared for what he believed would be his most crucial astral journey. He set up his room with every protective symbol he knew, from salt circles to sigils drawn in chalk, and sat in the middle, his mother's journal open in his lap, her mantra on his lips. As he transitioned into the astral plane that night, the atmosphere was charged with a palpable tension. The stars above seemed to flicker with a foreboding light, and the silence was oppressive.

Bill's heart pounded in his chest as he called out to the threshold guardian, challenging it to reveal itself. The response came not as a single entity but as a cacophony of whispers that swirled around him, each voice a fragment of his mother's, echoing her fears and warnings. From the whirlwind of voices, a form emerged, larger and more terrifying than any he had encountered before. It was a maelstrom of dark energy, and at its core, a face—a distorted version of Helen's, twisted in anguish.

"Bill, you must not tread further," it boomed, the voice resonating in the space between worlds. "This path is marked with sorrow and bound by blood. You are tied to a fate that was sealed before your first breath."

Fueled by a mixture of fear and defiance, Bill stood his ground. "I will not be bound by past mistakes. I will not let fear dictate my life," he declared, feeling a surge of power within him. His words seemed to have an effect; the guardian hesitated, its swirling form pulsating less violently.

As the standoff continued, Bill felt a connection to the guardian, a tether that pulsed with every beat of his heart. It was a bond formed of shared fate and familial blood, one that he realized he could not sever with force alone. It required understanding, acceptance, and a redefining of the legacy his mother had left him. With a deep breath, Bill reached out with his mind, not with defiance but with a plea for understanding.



Slowly, the guardian's form began to dissipate, not destroyed but acknowledged and respected.

As it faded, it whispered, "Be wary, William. Some doors, once opened, may lead to paths from which return is not possible."

Bill woke up in his room, the morning light streaming through the curtains. He was alone, the echoes of the night's encounter lingering in the air. He knew he had achieved a significant victory, but at what cost? The journal lay open on his lap, his mother's last entry staring back at him, a solemn reminder of the journey ahead.

## **Chapter 6: The Fractured Mirror**

The revelations of the previous night had left Bill reeling, but also empowered with a newfound resolve. He knew now that the threats from the astral plane were intertwined with his family's history, a legacy of curiosity turned to cautionary tales. As he pondered his next steps, Bill decided that knowledge was his best defense and possibly his means to break the cycle. He spent the following days immersed in his mother's journals and the esoteric books from the attic. Each page added layers to his understanding of astral projection, the risks involved, and the potential to influence one's fate. It wasn't just about exploring other realms anymore; it was about harnessing the knowledge to protect himself and others. Bill's academic pursuits at college took on a new direction. He approached his professors with a proposal to study the psychological and metaphysical implications of astral experiences, framing it as a blend of neurology, psychology, and paranormal research.

While most faculty members were skeptical, one professor, Dr. Elana Rowley, recognized the earnestness and urgency in Bill's quest and agreed to mentor him. With Dr. Rowley's support, Bill set up a small, unofficial research group, attracting a mix of curious and critical minds. Together, they delved into controlled experiments, with Bill often using himself as the subject, documenting each experience meticulously. However, as Bill's understanding deepened, so did the disturbances in his life. Objects in his room began to move inexplicably. Shadows lingered longer than natural, and whispers echoed during the day, not just in the depths of night. It was as if his interactions with the astral plane had thinned the veil between worlds, inviting not just knowledge but also danger into his daily existence. One evening, as Bill was walking home from a late session in the lab, he felt an eerie sensation of being followed. Turning down a dimly lit street, he saw his reflection in a puddle—a mirror image distorted by ripples. But as he watched, the reflection changed, showing not his own face, but the twisted, agonized face of the threshold guardian. Heart pounding, Bill hurried home, the echo of the guardian's last warning ringing in his ears.

That night, his attempts to enter the astral plane were thwarted by intense, frightening visions, barriers that seemed to be both protecting and imprisoning him. Frustrated and fearful, Bill met with Dr. Rowley to discuss the developments. She listened intently, her expression a mix of concern and fascination.

“Bill, you might be pushing too hard,” she cautioned. “The astral plane isn't just another dimension; it's a reflection of our deepest psyche. If you're not careful, it can shatter, like a mirror broken from too much force.”

Her words struck a chord. Bill realized that his mother's journey might have ended tragically not because of external entities, but because of her own psychological break, mirrored in the astral realm.

This insight shifted his perspective from battling the unknown to understanding and integrating the experiences. Determined to find a balance, Bill pulled back from his more dangerous explorations, focusing instead on grounding techniques and protective practices. He shared these findings with his group, turning their focus towards safety and mental health in astral projection. As the semester drew to a close, Bill presented his initial findings in a closed seminar, receiving mixed reactions but sparking a wider discussion about the intersections of science and the paranormal. Though some dismissed his work as pseudoscience, others were intrigued, opening up potential avenues for further research and validation. Bill knew he had only scratched the surface of what was possible. As he packed up his dorm room for the winter break, he found his mother's last journal entry, a reminder of her love and her warning. Reflecting on his journey, Bill felt a complex mix of loss, determination, and hope. The path ahead was uncertain, fraught with challenges both seen and unseen, but he was no longer a helpless child haunted by shadows. He was a seeker of truth, armed with knowledge and a will to forge his own destiny.

## **Chapter 7: Echoes of Reality**

The winter break brought a semblance of normalcy to Bill's life, but the echoes of his astral experiences resonated deeper than ever. Returning home, Bill found it difficult to reconcile the comforting familiarity of his father's house with the profound shifts in his own perceptions and understanding. His father noticed Bill's distracted demeanor and chalked it up to the stress of college, completely unaware of the true nature of his son's turmoil.

As the days passed, Bill tried to engage in ordinary activities, but the mundane interactions with neighbors and family friends felt surreal, as if he were watching them from behind a veil. His sensitivity to the unseen had heightened; shadows whispered more distinctly, and his dreams were vivid replays of his astral journeys, blurring the lines between sleep and wakefulness.

One night, during a dinner party hosted by his father, Bill's senses were overwhelmed by a cacophony of unseen voices and subtle movements in the periphery of his vision. He excused himself, retreating to the solitude of his room. There, he attempted to meditate, to quiet the voices, but was instead pulled unexpectedly into the astral plane.

This time, the transition was violent, a forceful yank from the physical world into a realm that had become increasingly hostile. The astral landscape was chaotic, a reflection of his inner turmoil. The guardian's presence loomed large, its form more terrifying and its intentions more

ambiguous. It confronted Bill, its voice a thunderous echo in the void, "Your pursuit of control invites danger, William. You tread paths that others fear to glance upon."

Bill, determined not to be intimidated, replied with a newfound assertiveness, "I seek understanding, not control. Tell me, what is the danger you speak of?"

"The very nature of your existence becomes a beacon for entities that crave the vitality of the living. Each journey here thickens the threads that tie your fate to theirs," the guardian warned, its form dissipating like smoke on the wind.

Shaken by the encounter, Bill returned to his body, his heart pounding, his mind racing with the implications of the guardian's words. The danger was not just to himself but potentially to those around him. This revelation weighed heavily on him, a burden that was becoming increasingly difficult to bear alone.

In the following days, Bill grew more reclusive, his interactions with his father strained by his inability to share the truth of his experiences. His father, concerned and bewildered by his son's behavior, suggested therapy, hinting at psychological strain or illness. Bill resisted, knowing that no conventional explanation or treatment could address the reality of his situation.

Determined to find his own solutions, Bill delved deeper into the esoteric texts he had brought from college. He began experimenting with protective rituals and talismans, converting his room into a makeshift sanctuary against the intrusions from the astral plane.

One evening, while deep in study, Bill felt a sudden, icy chill—an ominous sign that his efforts might be too little, too late. The shadows in the corners of his room grew denser, and a low whisper crept into the air, repeating a twisted version of his mother's mantra, now a sinister taunt, "Don't kill Bill, just chill."

Faced with the increasing threats, Bill realized that he needed to strengthen his defenses and seek allies, whether in the physical world or beyond. The next steps were unclear, but his resolve was firm. He would not succumb to the shadows that sought to claim him, nor would he allow his life to be overshadowed by fear.

After yet another profound encounter in the astral realm, Bill felt an overwhelming pull back to his body, stronger and more urgent than ever before. As he rushed through the astral corridor that led to his physical form, the voices of the astral entities merged into a cacophony of warnings and whispers. Their words melded into the wind that seemed to propel him forward, faster and faster, until a blinding light enveloped him, signaling his abrupt departure from the astral plane.

Bill's eyes snapped open, the morning sun streaming through the window of his childhood bedroom. For a moment, he lay still, disoriented, his heart racing as he tried to piece together the fragments of his dream. It was all so vivid—the university, the research, the astral projections—it had to be real. But as he glanced around the familiar room, with its superhero

posters and model airplanes, the truth sank in. He was still nine years old. It had all been a dream.

A dream... or a warning?

Shaken, Bill jumped out of bed, a sense of dread washing over him as the remnants of the dream lingered in his mind. He needed to see his mother, to hear her voice, to reassure himself that it was all just a figment of his imagination. He raced to her room, the mantra "Don't kill Bill, just chill" echoing in his mind like a ghostly lullaby.

He burst into her room, his breath catching in his throat. There she was, lying peacefully in bed, as if asleep. But something was off. The room was too still, too silent. "Mom?" His voice was a whisper, trembling with fear. When she didn't respond, he approached the bed slowly, reaching out a shaking hand to gently shake her shoulder.

She was cold, unresponsive.

Panic seized him as he realized his mother was not asleep; she was gone. His mind raced, trying to deny the reality before him, but the chilling truth was undeniable. Later, the doctors would confirm it—she had died in her sleep due to Sudden Unexplained Death in Sleep (SUDS), a rare but devastating occurrence.

As the realization set in, Bill felt the ground shift beneath him. The dream, his mother's passing, the whispers of the night—they all melded into a haunting symphony that seemed to mock his grief. Had his explorations in the dream led to this? Was it all connected somehow?

That night, Bill's estranged father showed up in the Emergency room. He quickly grabbed Bill, who was still in a state of shock, and all his stuff to live with his father now.

Bill layed down on his bed feeling weak and disoriented, he was noticing the shadows in his new room seemed to creep closer, more boldly than before. And as he drifted into the terrifying grip of sleep paralysis once more, he saw it—a shadowy figure at the end of his bed, whispering his mother's mantra with a sinister twist, "Don't kill Bill, just chill."

The nightmare had followed him to his father's house.

## Chapter 8: The Veil Lifts

The days following his mother's funeral felt like moving through a fog. Bill's reality had shifted irrevocably—his home now was with his father, a man of science and skepticism, who viewed Bill's accounts of astral projection and sleep paralysis as fantastical, if not worrying, symptoms of psychological distress.

Bill tried to communicate the truth of his experiences, the reality of the astral plane, and its haunting dangers, but each conversation ended in frustration and increased misunderstanding. His father, ever the pragmatist, arranged for Bill to see a child psychologist, believing it was the trauma of Helen's untimely death that spurred these tales of otherworldly journeys.

"Bill, these dreams, they're just your mind's way of coping," his father would say, fixing him with a look of concern over the breakfast table. "Dr. Anders can help you sort through these nightmares, help you find peace."

But Bill knew better. The shadows didn't recede with the daylight; they were more pronounced, whispering from the corners of his vision, tugging at the edges of his sanity. Each night, as he lay in bed, the veil between his world and the astral plane thinned, the familiar weight of paralysis pinning him down, the room humming with the charged energy of unseen eyes watching.

One night, driven to the brink of despair, Bill attempted to confront the shadowy figure that had taken on his mother's voice. As the shape coalesced at the foot of his bed, its form more menacing than comforting, Bill found his voice, thick with challenge.

"Who are you really? What do you want from me?" he demanded, his words slicing through the oppressive silence of his room.

The figure paused, its form flickering like a faulty projection, before it melted into the darkness, leaving behind a chilling whisper, "Don't kill Bill, just chill."

The mantra, once a source of comfort, had turned into a taunting riddle. It gnawed at Bill, each repetition a stark reminder of his loss and the deepening mystery surrounding his family's legacy with the astral world.

As the days turned into weeks, Bill poured over his mother's journals and books with a renewed fervor, desperate for answers that seemed just beyond his grasp. He began to document his own experiences more meticulously, hoping to find patterns or clues that could explain the connection between his astral encounters and his mother's death.

One afternoon, while Bill was lost in his notes, his father came into his room, a look of decision etched across his face. "Bill, I think it's time for a change," he said, his voice firm yet tinged with regret. "I've arranged for you to spend some time at a wellness retreat upstate. It's a place where you can get away from all this," he gestured vaguely at Bill's papers and books, "and focus on healing."

Bill understood then that his father's inability to believe him was not born of indifference but of fear—the fear of losing him to the same shadows that claimed his mother. Though it felt like a betrayal, Bill agreed, realizing that perhaps a new environment would offer him a different perspective, a new angle from which to approach the veil that had become his burden.

As he packed his bags, Bill felt a mix of resignation and determination. The retreat might be a forced hand, but it would not be a defeat. He would use the time to regroup, to strengthen his defenses, and to plan his next move in the ongoing battle between his world and the astral plane that refused to release its grip on his life.

## **Chapter 9: Sleep's Silent Pull**

The wellness retreat was nestled in the serene landscape of upstate New York, a world away from the suburban sprawl of Bill's hometown. The sprawling grounds were dotted with tranquil ponds and lined with walking trails that meandered through whispering woods. It was a place designed for peace, but for Bill, it was just another battlefield, albeit cloaked in nature's guise.

Upon arrival, Bill was struck by the calm that seemed to permeate the retreat. The staff were warm and the other guests carried with them an air of quiet recovery, each absorbed in their own journeys towards healing. Despite the peaceful setting, Bill couldn't shake the feeling of being watched, the familiar prickle at the back of his neck that reminded him that his battles were far from over.

The retreat offered a variety of therapies, from meditation and yoga to group counseling sessions. Bill participated with a semblance of engagement, using the activities to explore his mental landscape rather than seeking any supposed cure. During meditation sessions by the pond, while others sought inner peace, Bill probed the veil between the worlds, testing his control over his astral projections in a setting far from the triggers of his home.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon painting the sky in strokes of pink and orange, Bill sat by the water's edge, his eyes closed in a deceptive picture of serenity. Inside, he navigated the astral plane with a newfound agility, honing his ability to shield himself from the malevolent entities that lurked there. However, this night was different. As he drifted deeper, a gentle hand touched his shoulder, pulling him abruptly back to the physical world. Startled, Bill opened his eyes to find Maya, one of the counselors, kneeling beside him, her expression one of concerned curiosity.

"You seemed... distant," she said, her voice a soft intrusion into the silence. "More than is usual for meditation. Where do you go, Bill?"

The directness of her question took Bill by surprise. He studied Maya, her earnest gaze, her posture open and unthreatening. Something in her demeanor suggested that she might understand more than he expected. Hesitantly, Bill decided to trust her, sharing not everything

but enough—his experiences with sleep paralysis, the astral projections, and the shadows that haunted him. Maya listened intently, her nods not of disbelief but of recognition. "The mind is a powerful landscape, Bill," she offered after he had finished. "Sometimes, what we see and experience is more than just imagination or dreams. I believe you, and I think I can help you find some answers."

Relief, mingled with apprehension, washed over Bill. Here, in this unexpected place, he had found an ally. Over the following days, Maya introduced Bill to techniques that blended spiritual and psychological approaches, helping him to fortify his mental barriers and offering him tools to manage the intrusions from the astral plane more effectively. As Bill grew stronger, both mentally and spiritually, he began to feel a shift in his perception. The retreat, once a mere backdrop for his continued struggles, became a place of real growth. He found himself forming genuine connections with several other guests, sharing parts of his story and discovering that he was not as isolated in his experiences as he had thought. The night before his departure, Bill stood once again by the pond, looking out over the calm waters. He felt different, more whole than he had in months. He knew that the challenges were far from over, but he now carried with him new tools, new allies, and a renewed sense of purpose.

"I'm not just a victim of the shadows," he whispered to the reflection of the stars on the water's surface. "I'm a warrior, a guardian of my own soul."

And with that affirmation, Bill turned from the pond, ready to face whatever lay ahead, empowered by the knowledge that no matter how deep he ventured into the darkness, he was never truly alone.

## **Chapter 10: Returning Shadows**

Bill stepped off the bus into the crisp air of his hometown, the familiar streets now viewed through the lens of his recent experiences. The retreat had not only provided him with tools to protect himself but had also altered his perception of the world around him. He saw potential allies in unexpected places and threats lurking where none seemed to exist before. His father was waiting for him at the bus stop, his face lined with the weight of weeks apart. The reunion was warm but carried an undercurrent of tension. Bill's newfound confidence clashed with his father's cautious relief. On the drive home, Bill shared stories from the retreat, carefully omitting any mention of the astral plane. However, his father's skeptical gaze told him that the omitted truths were as loud as spoken words. Once home, Bill found his bedroom unchanged, a stark reminder of the night he had found his mother. The shadows seemed to press closer, as if challenging his newfound strength. That night, as he lay in bed, the veil between worlds thinned once again, and Bill braced himself for a confrontation.

But it didn't come. Instead, there was a whisper, different from the menacing taunts he was accustomed to. It was a plea, a sorrowful lament that resonated with his own pain. Bill, driven by a mix of dread and duty, ventured into the astral plane with a resolve to seek answers or offer solace. The astral landscape greeted him with a tumultuous welcome. The stars blinked erratically, and the winds howled with the voices of the lost. Bill navigated through this chaos

with a practiced ease, reaching the spot where he had often encountered the guardian. But instead of the fearsome entity, he found a small, quivering light, pulsating softly in the darkness. Approaching cautiously, Bill realized that the light was not just a beacon but a soul, lost and afraid. As he extended his astral form to comfort the light, it surged with recognition, transforming before his eyes into a semblance of his mother. But this was not the twisted, demonic version he feared—this was Helen, as he remembered her in life, warm and loving.

"Mom?" Bill's voice broke the heavy silence.

The form smiled sadly, her presence a balm to Bill's weary heart. "I'm so sorry, Bill," she said, her voice a gentle echo. "I never meant for you to inherit this burden." Bill struggled with a torrent of emotions—relief, sorrow, anger. "Why, Mom? What is all this?" Helen's form flickered, her energy waning. "It's a family curse, my love, one I hoped would end with me. But you, you're strong, stronger than I ever was. You can end it, Bill. Look for the Book of Shadows. It holds the answers." Before Bill could respond, Helen's form dissolved into the ether, leaving him alone with more questions than answers. The mention of the Book of Shadows sparked a flicker of recognition, a memory of his mother's locked cabinet back home. Determined to unravel the mystery, Bill returned to his body, his purpose renewed. The next morning, he approached the cabinet with a key he had found among his mother's belongings. Inside, he discovered an ancient, leather-bound book, its pages filled with arcane knowledge and family history.

As Bill pored over the book, he understood the magnitude of his legacy and the power he wielded. His journey had only just begun, and the path ahead was fraught with danger and discovery. But he was ready. Armed with knowledge and guided by his mother's spirit, Bill was prepared to confront the shadows and reclaim his family's destiny.

## **Chapter 11: The Legacy Unfolds**

Bill sat in the quiet of his room, the Book of Shadows open on his desk. The pages, filled with cryptic texts and ancient lore, illuminated the past and hinted at the dark forces that had shadowed his family for generations. With each word, the weight of his legacy pressed upon him, but so too did a sense of purpose solidify within his heart. Throughout the book, there were references to a ritual, one that could potentially sever the connection between the astral entities and his bloodline. However, the ritual was dangerous, requiring not only profound knowledge of the astral plane but also an object of power lost to time—the Astral Compass.

As Bill pondered his next steps, a sudden chill swept through the room, and the air thickened with a familiar dread. The shadows at the corners of his vision stirred, whispering in urgent, hissing tones. Ignoring them, Bill focused on the book, trying to piece together the clues that would lead him to the Astral Compass. The door creaked open, and his father peered in, an expression of concern etching his features. "Bill, are you okay? You've been up here for hours."

Bill looked up, meeting his father's worried gaze. "Yeah, Dad, I'm fine. Just doing some reading." His father nodded, not entirely convinced, but he said nothing more and closed the door softly behind him. Bill turned back to the book, his resolve hardening. He knew what he had to do. He



needed to find the Astral Compass, perform the ritual, and end the curse that haunted his family. As he prepared for bed, the whispering shadows grew more insistent, as if sensing his intent to destroy them. Bill recited his mother's mantra, "Don't kill Bill, just chill," not as a plea but as a declaration of war against the darkness.

The room settled, and Bill drifted into sleep, his dreams a tapestry of stars and shadows, of battles fought and yet to be fought. The night passed uneasily, but when morning came, it was clear and bright. Bill packed a small bag with essentials and the Book of Shadows. He left a note for his father, promising to return soon and explaining that he needed to find answers that were waiting for him out in the world.

Stepping outside, Bill felt the sun on his face and a breeze that seemed to whisper encouragement. He had a destination in mind, a place mentioned in his mother's journals as the last known location of the Astral Compass. As Bill set off on his journey, the house behind him seemed to sigh, a release of breath held too long. The adventure was just beginning, and the path would be fraught with danger, but Bill was no longer the frightened child hiding under the covers. He was a seeker of truths, a warrior against the shadows.

And somewhere in the distance, within the depths of the astral plane, the dark entities waited, their plans unknowable but inevitably intertwined with Bill's destiny.