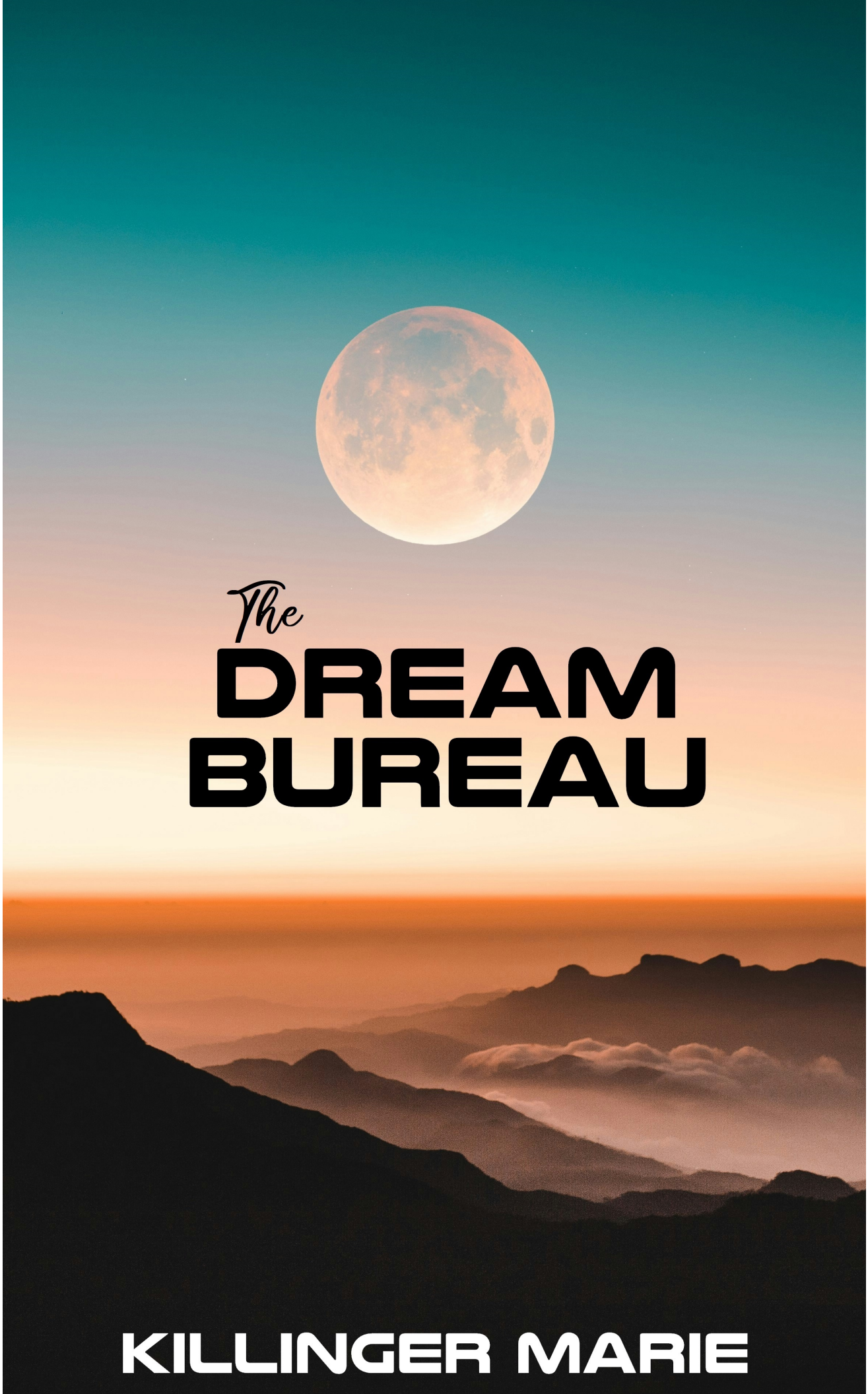
The
DREAM
BUREAU
KILLINGER MARIE

Marie Killinger

The Dream Bureau

Book 1

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To my mother.

The dawn of Paradoxia happened during a dark period of Human History. It is, however, difficult to exactly pinpoint the *when*, useless to try to understand the *where* and utopic to explain the *how*. Paradoxia came out of nothingness to be; where it could not even be imagined, it appeared. To make the matter easier, the historians have named that phenomenon the Big Imaginarium Bang and do not question it, in contrary to humans with their multiple suppositions: scientifical, theological and other domain of studies ending in -al.

Paradoxians do not follow a calendar. Their days are marked by the needs of the Unconscious which requires defending at all cost. Why? Third fundamental question of the History of Paradoxia. To which the historians replied with: because.

Paradoxia exists for a sole reason: the defence of dreams.

JON

Out of habit, he tucked a rebel strand once more into his mass of hair and looked at himself in the mirror for a short instant. The reflection that bounced back made him smile. After having studied for three years, his yearning was coming to an end. Earlier that morning, he had been given his uniform as he was leaving the mess hall after a nice breakfast shared with his now colleagues; he had hurried to his assigned room to put in on. A black pair of standard trousers and a light-grey top upon which was embroidered a patch with the logo of the elite he now belonged to. He proudly placed one of his four fingers on his initials stitched above said symbol, “JB8”. He took a big breath in, turned away from the mirror and exited to the corridor leading to the lower level. Once he’d have entered the flight room, he knew it, nothing would ever be the same again.

— Welcome to you all. Today, you have the grand honour to join the ranks of an elite admired by all. You have all outdone yourself to get to this point. Starting from now, you will be responsible for both your successes and failures. You’ll be working without a safety net, facing the unknown and the Unconscious alone, night after night. Do be careful of what you will be dreaming out there, you will need to be in absolute control of yourself and your thoughts. I hope you are ready; night has just fallen.

The captain of the paradoxical floor, ForestParker4 was used to repeating the same speech each year and pertinently knew that these green newcomers, of which he had followed the progress with mighty expectations, were about to live the best and worst night of their entire life. He still remembered the first time he had dreamt alone; everyone did.

He chased away the memory and took his access card out of his pocket; the door opened upon an effervescent room. Many dreamers were already seated, ready to take-off to the human unconscious. His assistant took charge of the new recruits and directed them to their own seat next to which the personal responsible for their first flight and wellbeing was busying.

— JonBlund8, seat 17. Assigned to human 674532497. Flux in constant augmentation, take-off in one minute.

It took Jon a few seconds to react before he hurried to his post. He lied down on it, and, right before being projected into a strange dream, he caressed the initials on his uniform. It all was really happening. He only had time to blink before opening his eyes on a seaside scenery, far away from the Dream Bureau.

PART ONE
LIGHT SLEEP

Chapter 1

JON

Jon quickly got up and brushed off the sand sticking to his clothes. The waves were crashing onto the shoreline in a troubling silence. He immediately looked around; he needed to find his human. He started to walk along the water, glancing left and right. With experience, he would someday be able to locate him, or her, from afar; however, after only six months of training on the paradoxical floor, this still was not a skill he had perfectly mastered just yet. He closed his eyes and tried nonetheless to perceive a presence.

It seemed to him that he was hearing something, the distant murmur of a conversation. He now faced an old beached drakkar boat which wooden planks appeared to have still been trees the day before. Many colourful shields adorned its flanks, the loose sails flapped silently in the violent gusts of wind. He hurried around it.

There, on a used and shabby-looking couch, were sitting two people. He had no trouble recognizing his protégé, his facial traits were much more defined than those of the young woman next to him; both were staring at the horizon. His role was to ensure the security of human 674532497, his job didn’t entitle him to just stand there and observe the nonsense of the Unconscious; Jon was a dreamer, he turned nightmares into dreams. Which meant that this idyllic landscape had some scary surprises in store.

Suddenly, a storm cell formed at an accelerated pace right above them all. The monochromous blue disappeared behind menacing black clouds. The wooden shields were ripped away from the drakkar boat and shot up to the sky, higher and higher they went until they were met with the fury of the elements. The rumbling of the thunder was so loud their eardrums were vibrating with pain. A rictus of fear froze on the face of his protégé, his friend screamed. Jon had to react, and fast. But before he could do anything, lighting hit the old couch which blew up in flames and they were mercilessly projected onto the sand.

His brain going a hundred miles an hour, Jon tried to direct the wind to push away the clouds as to restore the scenery to a much more pleasant one. Yet, as he

was busy calming the elements, he did not pay close attention to the changes of setting around them. In the meantime, the Unconscious of his protégé had come up with a new surprise. They were now standing in a dense and dark forest, knee-deep in snow and the young woman was nowhere to be seen. Surrounded by the frightening twilight, they remained idle. The rustling of the trees was troubling the silence. Wolves howled. It was impossible to pinpoint which direction the pack was coming from; the howls were encircling them.

Jon created a path to hurriedly lead his protégé to a chalet he could see in the distance, but it seemed highly unlikely he could make it out there in time. Red eyes were glowing behind the trees and shadows crept closer. Jon turned around and saw his protégé running in slow motion. He cursed himself; he should have remembered that in a dream, humans can only run at an illusory speed.

Said human seemed to have understood the problem and was flapping his arms in the hopes of gaining some speed on the monsters already at his heels. Jon raised a fence around the chalet. Few metres later, the human opened the gate and quickly closed it behind himself. Relief could be seen on his face reddened by the effort.

But Jon had made yet another mistake. If the barrier had looked high enough from afar, the wolves did not hesitate before leaping over it. He swore and made a mental note to revise the chapter on perspectives in space. But now was not the time to dwell on it, he bit the inside of his cheeks and decided to turn some snow into ice; a change of physical state which would have normally taken hours in real life but which Jon achieve in a snap of fingers.

However, giddy to have found a solution to his pressing problem, Jon had stretched the icy patch all the way to the feet of the runaway who brutally faceplanted onto the ground. Dizzy, it took him a few seconds to get back up; which he did holding his now painful ribs.

Behind him, the pack had barely slowed down. As one of the wolves leapt to have a taste of his protégé’s thigh, his front paws slipped on the ice and the beast crashed on its flank emitting a high-pitched squeak. The young man stepped into the chalet right on time to avoid the jaws of another wolf. As soon as he closed the door after him, the pack disappeared. His friend was waiting for him inside, his unconscious had instinctively kept her safe.

Jon dropped the snowball he had manually formed, now thinking it would have been a delusional weapon, and rubbed his hands together to warm them up.