



AWAKE (ARE WE)?

~ PART TWO ~
THE REBIRTH OF SUBLIN

Story by: **Marty Connor**

Written by: **Marty Connor & Rosie J May**

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The Rebirth of Sublin

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King Bad Dog



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Dedications

Once again I would like to dedicate Awake (Are We)? to my grandparents. They were very dear to me and each one of them taught me something about life and what it has to offer. Here's to:

Joan

Reginald

Eva

Fred

I love you all and miss you very much.

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Previously In Awake (Are We)?

Will and Connor, orphaned at birth had grown inseparable over the years and one day they woke up and found themselves in a bizarre world known as Sublin.

They met Kustos who is the Prince of one of the realms of Sublin, who tells Will, he is their long awaited saviour and that his destiny is to defeat the evil Shadow Night Lord.

Stunned by the news and unfamiliar with their surroundings they go with Kustos, who is keen to bring Will, known to all as The One Dreamer to his father, Lord Reginald of the Waterfall Kingdom. During their travels the two youths learn to use the dream energy, giving them abilities beyond their wildest imagination which helps them to overcome some horrendously, unfriendly adversaries.

Towards the end of part one Kustos leaves Will and Connor and is forced to rest in the Forest of Mallusion while his friends fly onto the Waterfall Kingdom to learn about why they have been pulled through to Sublin. After reacquainting himself with Jasmine, Princess of Mallusion, Kustos takes his leave and flies homeward only to discover the armies of the Shadow Night Lord heading for his kingdom. The war is coming: will Kustos return to his Kingdom in time?

And so the story continues . . .

1

And So It Begins

Will and Connor surveyed the land of The Waterfall Kingdom from outside the castle doors, watching the double suns breath life onto crops and buildings far into the distance. The scene was one of tranquillity but just over the horizon, dark, menacing clouds were forming, bringing with them the threat of a terrible destructive storm.

“Connor?” said Will suddenly breaking the silence.

His friend looked at him at the mention of his name.

“You know me better than anyone in any of these worlds.” Will continued. “You’ve gotta agree that me making a difference is a crazy idea? This Shadow Night Lord sounds like the ultimate bad dream, the most evil and powerful being this side of the universe so how am I expected to stand up against a guy like that? I’m not a warrior. I’m an IT geek. You told me that often enough.”

Connor stepped closer to his friend and laid a comforting hand on his shoulder. To him the situation seemed obvious. According to the history of Sublin, a powerful Dreamer would come to save the world. Now whether that was Will or not, Connor could not even hazard a guess but what he did understand by their recent experiences, was that time was quickly running out for the inhabitants of this world. Now, if by some odd coincidence he and Will happened to be in the wrong place at the right time, then perhaps it was

their destiny to become the supreme defenders of Sublin against the Shadow Night Lord.

“Will!” he said calmly, “I know things are looking pretty desperate right now but we have started to hold our own and our abilities seem to improve by the hour. Even I realise how daunting all of this is and the outcome of today looks bleak but we are here and have to stand side by side with our new friends.

I have known you all of my life. You’re not a coward, a person who would turn his back on friends at a time of need. If you look deep inside yourself, you’ll find the courage I know you have. Let’s put our fear aside and go to the Shadow Kingdom, find the Temple and go eyeball to eyeball with the Dark Lord himself.

I think this is where we are supposed to be. Just look at the wonders we have seen and what we have learned since we have arrived? I know this place is beyond our wildest dreams but have you thought, that just maybe, that was the main purpose of our lives together?”

“But I didn’t ask for any of this” moaned Will. “I am who I am. What if I’m not strong enough to beat The Dark Lord? What if I fail? I wish we had never come across this black fantasy?”

“Fantasy? “ Connor laughed trying to lighten the moment and alleviate Will’s fears. “Is that what you think this is? The reality about all this, is that the sky has two suns and we now possess amazing skills and power. If this is our imagination then it is missing one key factor.”

“That is?” asked Will.

“The fact, it is not make believe. This,” he continued indicating to the environment around them, “This is no dream. Look around you? Feel and see for yourself what surrounds us. This is real. You feel pain and hunger just as you did before; only here the truth is somewhat different. Hasn’t it occurred to you yet, that your life has been given a real purpose? You have been shown a pathway to walk, a reason for your existence. It is merely up to you to take the first steps and when you decide on that, you can be certain that I will not

be very far behind. I have every faith in you Will. I always have. In times of danger it is hard to know how anyone will react but for a Computer geek, you have held you own. Just take a good look at yourself and see what you have accomplished so far. Embrace your new skills and the true power you have. For that, I am sure, is what will get us both through the times ahead.”

Will thought for a moment over his friend’s advice and gave a half-hearted smile. At least he felt a little better, knowing that Connor had a full understanding of the dangers they were in. It reassured him briefly and yet was now troubling him again. In the years he had known Connor, never before had he demonstrated a strong, determined desire of aggression and it nagged away silently inside of him. Perhaps he did not know his friend as well as he had thought. Doubt was even creeping into his mind, who really was the enemy? Was it the Shadow Night Lord, who put fear in all who dare speak his name or was it the one person he trusted the most, his life long companion and friend?

Putting aside his confusion, he found there was also something else that kept him wondering. What was the true ending to the prophecy of Sublin? Had Lord Reginald and Lady Joan neglected to inform them of the outcome? Or was this part of the prediction a mystery, even to them as well?

Still deeply absorbed in his own thoughts, Will neglected to hear the loud cry, that filled the sky above them and as Connor thumped him in the arm to gain his attention, they both looked upward. A smile covered their faces, when they realised the large feathered bird about to land in front of them was harbouring their friend Kustos. A sense of relief swept through them, knowing he was at least now safe and back with them for the battle to come.

“Master William, Master Connor” Kustos exclaimed as he quickly dismounted the saddle. “Where is my Father? I must speak with him on a matter of urgency.”

Connor was about to explain to him that Lord Reginald was probably in the Council Room but before he had a chance to utter a word, the Castle’s large, solid doors flew open once more and banged loudly as they smashed into the stonewalls behind.

“So there you are?” bellowed the old king. “I see you have summoned the courage to return home but why with so much drama?”

It pained Kustos that after all this time his father still blamed him for passed events. How he had hoped, that by bringing home his mother and finding the Dreamer he had proved to his father who he was, a kind and loyal son. Timing though, he had been taught, was always of the essence and this was not the moment for sentiment or weakness. He would not permit Lord Reginald to dampen his resolve. Over the years he had been away he had learned many things from life’s experiences and these had enabled him to develop into a man and warrior. He had gained many attributes that even his father could not take away, including a belief in his own destiny in the darkened days that were to follow.

“Father!” replied Kustos firmly as he bowed his head slightly in respect. “It is good to see you again. My time away has taught me many lessons and I return as a soldier of the realm, not a young Prince running from the wrath of my King. I stand here in front of you as the general of our armies and ask that you hear me out?”

Lord Reginald was taken a back by his sons’ forceful announcement and a warm feeling of pride gurgled within him but as leader of the Waterfall dominion his proclamation would show a sign of weakness and so he curbed his emotion as best he could. Time had changed Kustos. He was a man of loyalty and strength and despite their differences, one that Lord Reginald knew he could rely upon in times of difficulties.

In the Waterfall Kingdom, secrets were hard to keep and news of Kustos’s return spread throughout the army. Lady Joan also heard the news and rushed outside the castle walls to greet her son. For many years she had disregarded the laws of protocol and with her arms outstretched she rushed towards him.

“My dear Kustos” she smiled as she hugged him tightly. “I am relieved to see you are safe and well. How are our friends in Mallusion?”

“Lord Frederick and Lady Eva are well but before I left they were summoned to their outer villages where a disturbance had unnerved their people. Since then I have not seen them” he told her.

“What of Jasmine?” She asked curiously as she noticed the wry smile form upon his face at the mention of her name.

“Jasmine is fine” Kustos answered as he smiled to himself over the reminder of the vision of their parting moments, which was still lingering vividly in his mind.

Lady Joan did not need to pry any further. The look in her son’s eyes was enough to tell her he was in love and at that moment in time the happiest he had been for a long while.

“Father, Mother,” Kustos continued on a more serious note, “I know you say I have a brand for the dramatic and believe me, if I could atone this account I would, although it would not make my news any less damaging.”

“Then tell us what it is boy.” urged the King impatiently.

“Reginald!” scolded Lady Joan.

Lord Reginald, taken aback by her tone cast his eyes to the ground and shuffled his foot in the dirt, like a naughty child. It was the first time that either Will or Connor had ever heard her ladyship raise her voice and together they silently agreed they were glad she was not their mother.

“I am sorry my son” the old man apologised. “Time has drained me of any patience I once had. Please Kustos give us your news?”

Now it was Kustos’s turn to be surprised by his father’s attitude. Perhaps time and the return of his mother had been a great healer and just maybe, if either of them managed to survive the Great War, the wounds of the past could be healed and a new relationship created on present history.

“The news I bring is not good” Kustos began. “Whilst flying back from Mallision, I was forced to re-route via the walls of the Shadow Kingdom. The gates to the Dark Lands were open wide and spewing from the belly of the empire was The Shadow Lord’s army, maybe eighty or ninety thousand strong, all heading towards us as we speak.”

“Was it footmen that you saw?” asked Lord Reginald.

“Others also” continued the Prince, “As I flew along the shoreline, I caught a glimpse of a flotilla of boats, crammed from bow to stern with Exsoms. No matter what forces we gather, they still outnumber us tenfold. For

the safety of our people we must evacuate the kingdom while we have time. It is impossible to think we can win this war, here and now. Our only option to survive is to run away and hide until we can choose our own moment to attack.”

At the implication of retreat, anger filled Lord Reginald’s face and without a word he marched over to his son and grabbed him by the arm.

“Come my young masters,” he bellowed at Will and Connor as he dragged Kustos into the castle. “It is time to make plans.”

The two youths followed without question and Lady Joan ran to keep up. As soon as the group was within the castle walls, the large wooden doors were slammed shut and locked. With the Council room the nearest of meeting places, this was the direction the King took and once all were seated inside, he released his grip upon his son’s arm.

“Have you not learned anything Kustos?” He challenged furiously.

“I have learned enough not to skirt around the truth. For that would be a mistake” replied Kustos equally as annoyed by his father’s infantile attitude towards him.

“I have not scolded you for hiding the truth but for your lack of diplomacy.” pointed out the King.

“Diplomacy?” laughed Kustos sarcastically who in all his years could not remember any demonstration of that from his father.

“Enough.” interrupted Lady Joan. “You are both behaving like children. A family brawl will not resolve the situation. Let us just get down to business and leave your differences at the door.”

“My dear you are right.” Lord Reginald apologised. “I am sorry Kustos, I allowed my emotions to get the better of me. I did not want the conversation over heard and cause panic amongst our people. You have been gone too long to understand the pressures we are all under.”

“Perhaps so father.” agreed Kustos, “but I do know that our numbers were depleted by the last war and we do not have enough people here to defend the Waterfall Kingdom at this time. What loyal subjects we have will all be slaughtered by the first wave.”

“How long do you think we have?” Lady Joan asked her son.

“I can only assess their distance but I would imagine the first armies will reach our stone gates by dusk tomorrow at the latest. The fleet, I cannot say.”

Will and Connor looked at Kustos and then at each other. Their friend sounded concerned and if there was one sure thing they were both certain of, his judgement should always be trusted.

“Then we have a plan,” announced Lady Joan. “We must send our royal messengers around our kingdom and ask that every woman and child pack only what they need. Then they must go through the mountain caves and out to our shores on the other side of the kingdom. There they will find our secret refuge, hidden within the layers and crevices of the old mountain stone.”

A single gulp filled the silent room as Lady Joan took a breath. Everyone looked around and noticed one of the Royal soldiers guarding the door turn ashen as he listened to the information being exchanged. Thoughts of devastation and destruction ran through his wandering mind and he jumped to attention when spoken to.

“You!” ordered Lady Joan.

“Yes, my lady,” he replied immediately.

“Gather some of your most trusted men and make your way around the kingdom, spreading the word. Ask that all able bodies report to the castle gates and that all women and children are safely housed within the caves by nightfall. It is a good day’s journey to the other side and the further they can get away, the more chance they will have to survive. Tell them that their very existence is their primary duty to their realm.”

The guard bowed his head before leaving and then rushed off down the corridor to rally his men and warn them of the imminent battle. When the group was once more alone, Lady Joan continued her appraisal of the situation.

“I know this sound ludicrous but we must fight my son. We must buy the future generations of the Waterfall Kingdom time,” she told him as she rested her hand on Kustos’s arm, “but we will not sacrifice those that have no place in battle.”

“If that is your wish” Kustos smiled weakly, knowing full well that his mother always got her own way, “then there is no more to be said.”

Again an eerie silence fell within the walls of the council room as each and every one of them considered their fate. It was only Connor that finally broke the sombre atmosphere.

“Alright, so I can see the plan” he interrupted, “but could I just make a teeny, weeny, suggestion?”

“Of course my young friend,” agreed Lord Reginald, “Speak away.”

“I personally think we should send a few men to the nearby Kingdoms and ask for help.” Connor replied.

“Master Connor” answered the King, “You heard my son. We do not have time to rally troops nor do I think any would come to our aid.”

“They might!” exclaimed Connor. “Knowledge of the Dreamer must now be rife amongst the realms, don’t you think? Perhaps this will give them a reason to fight. Have they all not read this prophecy of your world? Do they not believe? Besides, what harm could it do to ask? Every able-body in this case could help and one or two men could really make a difference in the grand scheme of things.”

For a moment there was silence again as the realm lord thought about the proposal and when he was fully satisfied with his deliberation, he spoke.

“I suppose it would not hurt,” he declared. “Most believe in the prophecy and all want the war to come to an end.”

“Then I shall see to it.” Announced Lady Joan as she opened the Council door and walked out, ensuring that it was closed behind her.

“Father” said Kustos once his mother had left the room.

“Kustos,” replied the king “I am happy for your mother’s sake that you have returned but I can not help but wish your brothers were here now to help in this fight. At least then I could still believe we have the courage to survive these dark days.”

With lowered head, Kustos dropped to one knee as though a great pain was stabbing at his heart. Tears prickled the back of his eyes. Connor could

feel the hurt and for the first time in his life, he was glad that he did not have a father to appreciate the qualities he was born with. He glanced across at Will and knew he felt the same, only Will was always quick to speak his mind and Connor sensed he was about to say something in Kustos's defence.

In the short time they had known Lord Reginald, Connor did not think an opinion would help in this case and so he grabbed his friend by the arm to stop him.

"I can only apologise father," said Kustos sadly, "that you feel I am not worthy to fight in their stead. I too wish my brothers were here by my side but they are not and nothing will bring them back. I am what fate has left behind but whether you believe me or not, I will fight for your honour, just as any other son would fight for their father."

"Yes, yes, yes." Said the Lord impatiently, not really listening to what Kustos had to say "Whatever you say. Now get up and stop grovelling on the floor."

Kustos got to his feet and Connor could see by his face that the reprimand lay heavily within his chest. The prince had tried so hard to gain his fathers respect and even after so many years, the Old King still could not forgive him for something that was beyond his control.

"In our world, Kustos" smiled Connor, as he put a friendly hand on his shoulder, "It is quite common for sons to fall out with their fathers. Admittedly though not over the death of a family member, it's usually something far less trivia, like getting some girl pregnant or wanting a car, or how much debt they are in. Trust me, he'll get over it."

"But how long do I have to wait?" asked Kustos sadly. "Is time not supposed to be a great healer?"

"Yes it is" came the response "but we are not just talking about time here. For years your lives have been a constant battle against the Shadow Night Lord and neither of you have been able to grieve together and talk things through. One day, you will get the opportunity and the air will be cleared and then you will be friends again."

“For one so young, Master Connor, you appear to understand many things” smiled Kustos.

He knew that Connor was right and that one day his father would be proud of him, that he was convinced of but whether or not either of them would survive to reconcile their differences was doubtful.

“I was beginning to wonder where all that wisdom came from, myself” interrupted Will, as he listened to Connor’s profound statement of life. “What magazines have you been reading?”

“Ha, ha very funny” Connor retorted, “I just think, that by being outside the bubble, I can see things a little more clearly, that’s all.”

“Outside the bubble? What sort of cliché is that” replied Will “but joking apart, I think you do. Though I still have to ask the question . . . what magazines have given you such an insight to life?”

Before Connor could answer the Council doors flew open and in walked Lady Joan. By her side was a stranger. He was about five feet ten in height and wearing a red cloak over metal armour protecting his shoulders, arms and chest. Just the shine from the metal alone would have dazzled an enemy and given him an advantage but the muscular frame that was hidden beneath was also enough to bear the brunt of a fight. His upright stance and strong square jaw led to the immediate impression of a proud warrior and had it not been for the occasional grey that highlighted his dark, brown hair, he could easily have been mistaken for less than his thirty something years.

“My Love!” cried Lady Joan excitedly. “Look who has come to visit? It is Durban.”

The warrior turned slightly pink at such an emotional announcement and bowed his head courteously towards the King. Lord Reginald acknowledged the well-mannered response and signalled to Durban to approach him.

“He has sent men southward bound to ask for help from Lord Frederick and Lady Eva and ordered our riders to gather the men and move out the women and children.” continued Lady Joan.

Pleased by Durban’s initiative, Lord Reginald decided to introduce him to his guests.

“Durban?” He said. “I would like you to meet the legends of our history.”

Connor and Will walked over to the soldier and both held out their hands.

“Master Connor” Lord Reginald introduced, “this is Commander Durban. Not a braver man in our kingdom could you find.”

Durban lowered his head again and bent to one knee.

“A pleasure to meet you, sirs” he said.

Connor felt uncomfortable by the worshipping pose of the warrior kneeling before him and held out his hand.

“The pleasure is all ours,” replied Connor, “I have met so many brave warriors since arriving in Sublin and still cannot understand how you have not managed to overthrow the Dark Lord.

“We do not have the power, sir” Durban replied. “It is the destiny of the Dreamer that can end this war, not us.”

“I’m not quite sure I can agree with you there, Durban” Connor responded, “but . . . whatever! Fortunately though, now we have that ace up our sleeve,” he said calling his friend over, “Will? Come and meet Commander Durban.”

The warrior was amazed at the frivolous manner in which Connor addressed such an important icon and continued to remain kneeling, awaiting his introduction. Will, like Connor also felt uncomfortable by the regal manner imposed upon him and knelt before the warrior.

“I am pleased to meet you Durban” smiled Will as he grabbed the soldier’s hand.

Durban gripped it tightly and shook it once before releasing it again.

“So you are The Dreamer?” He mused loudly. “After all these years of preparation you now stand before my Lord in this great kingdom. It has been a vision of mine to live long enough to meet with you. So many questions I have to ask and yet so little time to talk.”

Will was not use to such adorations and cringed as the soldier waxed lyrically on about The Dreamers power and he was quite relieved when Lord Reginald interrupted the conversation.

“Durban?” He ordered. “I need to know what strength we have in our ranks and what forces we can call upon.”

“My Lord!” said Durban as he got to his feet. “The news I fear will not please your ears. Our Dream Watchers are dwindling in numbers as their battle against the Dream Stealers continues.”

“How can this be?” Asked the King, “Have I neglected my people for so long that I do not know what is happening in my own kingdom?”

“Do not be so hard on yourself, my love” said Lady Joan calmly as she grasped his hand in hers. “None of your people would condemn you for what pain you have been suffering. What must be done now to defuse this situation is to understand our deficiencies and deal with them.”

“As usual my dear, you are right,” smiled the old man briefly, “our power is a united strength and with you and Kustos now back to re link the circle, we can only move forward. Durban? Explain to me about the Dream Watchers.”

“My Lord,” continued Durban, “it is the Dream Stealers that are causing most of the problems at the moment. They are becoming increasingly difficult to track within the Dream Realm. This is why we have deployed most of our armies to roam the catacombs, in an effort to hold them down. With the few Dream Watchers we have here and the men we can muster from our fields, I can assess no more than one thousand strong to defend these walls.”

“One thousand? That will not be enough against the perils that await us!” said Kustos.

“It will have to be my son, for there is no time for reinforcements” interrupted the King curtly. For a moment he remained silent as he pondered over the next plan of action, then, when fully satisfied of the choices he had made, he spoke again. “So be it!” Lord Reginald announced. “Durban I need you to collect as many Dream Watchers as you can and tell them what they are about to face. I do not want or will tolerate faint- hearted warriors. Once you have done that you must collect all willing fighters of our kingdom and take them to the city walls.”

“Consider it done, my lord,” replied the Commander as he saluted the king and quickly left the room.

The situation concerned Durban greatly but the confidence of his king and the reputation that preceded Connor and Will, gave him a glimmer of hope.

He was a warrior more than a religious man and yet, just once he thought perhaps the expectations of the prophecies might play to their advantage.

With Durban now departed on his mission, Lord Reginald turned his attentions to Kustos and the two youths. This was not the time for Will to take on the Shadow Night Lord. Lord Reginald was certain of that. The battle between Good and Evil was written for a more desperate era and although the situation seemed grave, the people of Sublin still had belief on their side. The wise king felt that only when that had been drained from every last standing warrior, should Will be expected to take up the challenge and find his destiny. Until that moment, it was imperative to train him up and keep him safe at all cost.

“Kustos” said the Lord to his son. “Master Connor and William are your responsibility. You must teach them both the basics of attack and defence.”

“Yes Father!” agreed Kustos immediately.

He too had been considering their options and he knew it would be vital for his charges to understand the ways of the warrior.

“Come young masters, follow me?” he ordered.

“We have used our powers before, you know,” said Connor somewhat upset by the inference of their inadequate fighting skills.

“I’m sure you have” agreed Lord Reginald, “but there is more to fighting the power of evil than simply firing a couple of energy bolts at them.”

“Energy Bolts” exclaimed Connor who was about to elaborate on what type of energy bolts he possessed when Kustos grabbed him by the arm and began dragging him out of the room.

“I would not, if I were you,” he said. “Father always has the last word.”

Lord Reginald chuckled to himself as his son and the two youths left him alone with his wife.

“He hasn’t changed a bit, has he?” He smiled fondly.

“No, my dear, he is his fathers’ son.” Lady Joan replied, “He still lingers on your every word and craves your notice in return. No matter what time has passed between you, he will always love and respect you. Just as deep down, I know your feelings are the same. All I ask is that you tell him at least once

before this war is over, otherwise the opportunity may not arise for either one of you.”

“I will, dearest,” he smiled again, “I promise but for now let us take rest, for we are not as young as we used to be and fighting can be a tiring business.”

With that he carefully gripped her hand as though made of the finest bone china and led her out of the room.

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