

THE DEMON AT WORK

Written by

Karthik Tumuluru

We see a blurry yellow silhouette - a man waking from bed.

TITLE over the image

INT. BEDROOM - VERY EARLY IN THE MORNING.

In a pitch black room, a smartphone rings on a bedside table, waking up a sleeping JASON (late 20's). He checks the screen- a call from 'Varun P.'.

VARUN (O.S.)

Jason, final batch is done. You've got to come over. It's wor-

JASON

(really drowsy)

It's [checking phone] fucking 4:15 dude, can't this wait?

VARUN (O.S.)

Trust me this'll wake your ass up!

(beat)

I've got some hot Colombian coffee left, how about that?

As Varun talks, Jason's phone slowly slips from his hand.

VARUN (O.S.)

Jason?

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

Varun is working on a thingamagig, in pitch darkness. He is under a blanket, lit in a ghostly blue. A washing machine-like whirr fills the room. Two knocks on the garage door. Varun quickly flips a few switches around the contraption and throws a giant black blanket on it. He presses a remote control - the door lifts up.

EXT. VARUN'S GARAGE - A LITTLE LATER THAT MORNING.

Varun sees Jason, with his car parked behind him, somewhat carelessly. He leads a confused, half-asleep Jason in.

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

As the shutters close and the lights turn on, Jason looks around - towers of cardboard boxes surround him. Varun hurriedly walks towards him with a steaming cup of coffee. Jason takes a sip.

JASON

(beat)

Is this Colombian?

VARUN

(shrugging)

...I mean it's hot.

Varun heads over to his table. He shifts a stack of files from a chair, making way for Jason. Varun turns the lights off, as they settle. He flips a few switches around, as Jason keeps sipping in anticipation.

The whirr starts up, as the blue begins to emanate again. Varun gently pulls off the black cloth to reveal a series of black cabinets, at the center of which is what looks like a giant empty inverted fishbowl of sorts. Within the crystal ball are two bright blue balls of light, spinning around each other like stars surrounding a black hole.

Right next to it lies a makeshift VR headset.

VARUN

This is- first off, you've not told anyone.

JASON

Nope, nobody.

VARUN

Alright. Yeah, this is it.

(beat)

And it works.

Varun's so happy his smile looks like a hammock you could sleep on.

JASON

What's its accuracy like now?

VARUN

Oh a colleague at the institute actually worked this out. He said that if it took **all** the molecules of water on the earth, and tried to predict where **each** of them would be in the next 5 years, it'd get about two dozen wrong.

Jason looks at it in astonishment.

VARUN

At most.

JASON

Have you decided on a name yet?

VARUN

We had a contest on this... we settled on "The Demon".

JASON

Why "The Demon"?

VARUN

There was this mathematician named  
Laplace who-

JASON

-ah, the chemistry thing.

VARUN

No, that's the other thing. This demon  
knew everything about the past, so he  
figured out the future with it.

JASON

Probably made some good side bets too.

Varun blankly smiles.

VARUN

Okay... wanna see the demo? Put the  
skeptic to sleep?

JASON

Well yeah, I'll need to see it at work  
first. Are you going to tell me to  
think of a number?

VARUN

(beat)

24?

JASON

25.

VARUN

Nah I actually designed something more  
interactive. Got a few quarters with  
you?

Jason shuffles his pockets. He hands 5 quarters over to  
Varun.

VARUN

Okay, so I'm going to wear this and it'll tell me whether they'll land on heads or tails-

JASON

-that's it?

VARUN

-and where they're going to land. After removing it I'll turn it off, turn on the lights and you throw the coins up.

Varun wears the headset. He looks around a bit and crouches forward, muttering something to himself. About a minute after this, he removes the headset and turns off the same switches he turned on earlier. Drapes back on.

He grabs a marker and turns the lights on. Like an electrician about to drill some holes, he marks very specific points around the room. He takes a couple of steps back, giving Jason space.

VARUN

Alright, hold them like a heap and toss them up.

Up they go, and after some rattling and spinning, they settle down.

VARUN

Okay, try finding them.

Jason snoops around - he finds a mark under each coin.

VARUN

Convinced?

JASON  
(beat)

Yeah.

VARUN  
So that's the demo. We're thinking of doing a panel discussion sort of thing afterwards, focusing on a few industry applications... mostly insurance and construction.

(beat)  
I'll be out next week though, it's an urgent visit. Need you to keep watch and run a few small tests for me.

JASON  
Sure thing, man.

VARUN  
They should be pretty simple, just a bunch of sense checks... I'm keeping a notebook here on this desk with the instructions for each test written in, you just note the results in the boxes next to them.

JASON  
You mean put the helmet on,-

VARUN  
Read the instructions, put the helmet on, it'll all make sense. You can mentally choose times and places to "look at", with this.

Jason picks the notebook up and flips through the first few pages.

JASON  
Shouldn't be a problem.

VARUN

Cool.

JASON

And any questions...

VARUN

It'll make sense, but... sure, call me.

Some uncomfortable silence.

VARUN

And yeah, don't-

JASON

Yeah, I got it, just run the tests.

VARUN

Yep.

(beat)

By the way, you might want to move your car out quickly. It's parked bad.

EXT. VARUN'S GARAGE - MORNING.

The shutter slowly rolls up, revealing a blaring honk from an annoyed car. A surprised Jason turns to Varun.

JASON

(motioning)

Did you actually see-

VARUN

-just common sense, man.



TITLE CARD: "Day 1"

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE - DAY.

Jason flips through the instruction booklet, then turns to its first page, "Putting on the Eyes", with a list of preparatory exercises below. He reads through them, puzzled, and puts the booklet down. After staring at the headset for a bit, he turns all the lights off.

One sigh and he grabs the headset.

BLACK

As he opens his eyes, a blurry yellow-on-black landscape greets him - as he looks around and things look a bit more focused, we realize that we are watching him enter the garage earlier in the morning.

He closes his eyes and lifts off the headset, switching the lights back on. He opens the booklet again - the exercises, and tasks, are making a lot more sense now.

He completes task upon task, checking boxes and adding notes every now and then at the bottom of each page. Put on headset, observe, take off headset, record.

The time is 4PM. He checks off 'Batch 1' on the first page of the booklet, and places it on the desk. After covering and tidying things, he leaves.

EXT. VARUN'S GARAGE - LATE AFTERNOON.

Jason walks up to his car, and spots pigeon excrement on his windshield.

TITLE CARD: "Day 2"

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

Jason watches a vase crash on the floor in yellow-black. With his blinks, we see the vase at various stages of falling, shattering and dispersing, as if Jason's seeking a YouTube video using his eyes. He takes off the headset, looks for the vase under the table using his phone flashlight, picks it up and drops it. He carefully investigates the broken pieces, then checks off a few boxes on the booklet, the last being 'Batch 2'.

It is 3PM, and he is done with the day's tests. Right before he gets up, he turns back, and puts the headset on. A police officer gets down from his car and walks towards Jason's car. We CUT TO-

EXT. VARUN'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON.

Jason nods at the police officer as he starts the car.

TITLE CARD: "Day 3"

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

Jason opens the booklet to "TESTING - DAY 5" - all previous tasks have been checked.

He puts the headset on and-

FADE TO BLACK

FADE FROM BLACK

-turns the lights on. He checks all boxes under 'TESTING - DAY 6'. He flips through the booklet again. There's not a single mistake, no notes, just checks.

Jason sits back, fidgeting, looking at the headset. He is staring at a miracle. He reaches for his phone.

VARUN (v.o.)

Hey how's it going?

JASON

Hey, it's going fine.

VARUN (v.o.)

You're at the end of day 3 now. On pace?

JASON

(beat)

Yeah.

VARUN (v.o.)

(beat)

So what's up?

JASON

So... once I'm done with this I just leave the booklet here and that's it?

VARUN (v.o.)

Yep. I'll be back and do some final sense checks, and it's good to boot.

JASON

That sounds good.

(beat)

So... **hypothetically** if you use it, could you be detected?

VARUN (v.o.)

(beat)

Man, I'd rather not.

JASON

I'm sure you did. Dude. Come on.

VARUN (v.o.)

I did.

JASON

And you knew it worked perfectly.

VARUN (v.o.)

Yeah.

(beat)

I did use it for a bit. I could tell when I was about to drop something. When a fly would land on my face, where it would land. I didn't test it completely, but I just knew. I didn't use it for any sort of gain, but my curiosity kept me checking it. I didn't like what it made me, my life was getting too predictable-

JASON

-but you could still see the future, and see any consequences that are coming your way.

VARUN (v.o.)

-yeah, but the thing is looking at it gave me a blueprint, and I just knew I had to follow it. It predicts everything, so everything is inevitable, so you become a slave to the blueprint-

Jason's eyes are locked in with the headset. Varun's voice fades into the background.

VARUN (v.o.)

-Jason, remember, it doesn't advise you on your future, it just tells you what happens. It's all on you.

Radio silence.

VARUN (v.o.)

Jason.

JASON

Alright I understand. Thanks man. I'll let you know when the tests are done.

VARUN (v.o.)

Alright, thanks. Take care.

TITLE CARD: "Day 4"

EXT. VARUN'S GARAGE - AFTERNOON.

Jason leaves early, with all tests done. As the garage doors shut, he reads his left palm, and walks towards a local grocery store.

INT. STORE - DAY.

JASON

Could I get a lotto ticket?

ATTENDANT

Sure, what numbers would you like?

JASON

Uh... 33, 9, 24, 48 and 28.

ATTENDANT

Okay, here you go.

INT. JASON'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT.

Jason's lottery ticket is all scrunched up in his hand. As he checks the results on his laptop, we read the exact same numbers off of his ticket. He leans back, and looks at the ceiling.

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

After some deliberation, Jason grabs the headset.

INT. CASINO - EVENING.

Jason's eye is on the spinning roulette ball. He is about to double his money, and breaks a smile.

EXT. CASINO - EVENING.

He walks out with a bag, and rushes into a taxi.

EXT. CROWDED STREET - EVENING.

He walks on the pedestrian crossing cautiously, with another bag, this time heftier.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING.

He casually walks across the road as cars zip by him, as if he's playing Frogger on easy mode.

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

Jason puts on the headset. In yellow-black, we see what appears to be a briefcase, in a bank. We fast-forward to a first-person view of Jason holding the briefcase, but surrounded by security guards. Rewind to find the moment the security guard spots Jason.

After he switches the lights on, Jason looks at the headset, concerned.

He tries to draw what he saw on his palm, drawing a basic blueprint based on what he observed, marking police officers with dots.

INT. BANK - DAY.

Jason enters, standing in line for one of the counters. He shuffles his pockets, and notices the unguarded briefcase. He goes to inquire a nearby teller about something quick, and on the way to the briefcase, takes his pen out of his pocket and drops it.

As he reaches for it, he looks at his palm and sees a security guard walking toward that exact spot. He grabs the briefcase and dodges the security guard's line of sight, but doesn't notice a second security guard observing him, and whispering into a walkie talkie. As he walks to the exit, he's apprehended by both security guards, who take him through the exit door. He's approached on the exact spot he marked on his palm.

INT. PRISON - DAY.

Jason is sitting behind the window, as Varun walks towards him and takes a seat. He picks up the phone, so does Jason.

VARUN

You did more than the tests.

JASON

I saw the future.

VARUN

And it controlled you.

JASON

I saw those things happen, I planned out how to evade them.

VARUN

I'm sure you did, but you missed out something important.

JASON

What?

VARUN

The Demon knew you would do that.

JASON

What do you mean?

VARUN

It knew you'd use it to see what was happening, that's part of what it used to give you the prediction.

JASON

It can't be correct if I can change the future.

VARUN

It **is** correct, because it knew you were trying to.

Varun slowly takes the phone away from his ear, looking at Jason with disappointment.

JASON

Wait-  
(beat)  
-did you know?

Varun shakes his head, puts the phone down, and leaves.

CUT TO-

INT. VARUN'S GARAGE.

The lights are all switched off, and the only thing we see of the Demon is its two blue orbs, rotating around each other.

JASON (o.s.)

About all of this? That I would get caught? I bet you saw, and you knew!

FADE TO BLACK.