In a word where soulmates share dreams as long as they both live, you can sometimes know the worst about your partner long before you ever meet.

Notes

I saw "shared dreams" on a soulmate prompts list a few weeks back and thought,

"Wow, wouldn't that be awful if that were how it was for May and Daisy."
followed by
"Wow I'm totally gonna have to write that."

There is no way I'm every committing to as long of an AU as my last one, but this was a fun sandbox to play in.
that could lead to shame or embarrassment when the two of them finally meet. Thankfully, most teenagers’ soulmates are teenagers at the same time, and sharing embarrassing dreams is a pretty standard experience. And since most of those dreams lend you enough clues about your soulmate that you might know them when you finally meet in person, few people really wish things were different—after all, who wouldn't want to know as much about their soulmate as possible before they actually come face-to-face?

Melinda May grows up trying to pay attention to any dreams that contain unfamiliar faces and settings, so she is keenly aware by the time she hits high school that she has never had a dream that feels completely foreign to her. She tries not to worry about it—plenty of people have age differences with their soulmates. But by the time she’s finished high school and is on to concurrent enrollment with SHIELD Academy and a nearby university, she can’t prevent a tiny thread of worry from slipping in.

Does my soulmate never dream? Are they comatose? Dead?

Do I even have a soulmate at all?

Then, out of nowhere in her twentieth year of life, a nightmare wakes her up with her heart pounding and a scream strangled in her throat. Her roommate is understandably alarmed and tries to calm her down, asks her what she dreamed about, why it was so scary…

“I was lost,” is all Melinda can answer. “I was lost and I was scared.”

The nightmare becomes a regular recurrence. Sometimes there is gunfire. Sometimes there are explosions. Sometimes she’s running amidst the chaos screaming incoherently, sometimes she’s being passed from arms to arms. Most of the faces she sees look Asian, but there are some that are white and speak English where she can hear. Melinda tries to pay attention, to gather information about where her soulmate is and what horrible thing has happened to them.

Years pass, and the dreams diversify, but that first nightmare with the horrible feeling of being lost never really disappears completely. By then, however, Melinda is an inaugurated field agent, and her own nightmares start to fight for center stage.

Mary Sue Poots has so many nightmares growing up.

By the time she’s old enough to pay attention, to not just feel frozen terror when she’s thrust into an unfamiliar dream, Mary thinks at that first her soulmate must be a movie star. The backgrounds of their dreams always seem to be exotic places, settings Mary has only ever seen in movies. Her soulmate has adventures, mostly dangerous ones, though she always seems to have people to help her within reach. People call her “Agent”, and she feels her soulmates pride and thrill whenever she hears that word.

The dreams quickly turn into nightmares, however, when something goes wrong. It’s always her fault—her soulmate’s fault. You didn’t check the corner. You didn’t get out undetected. You didn’t have a plan C ready. You weren't fast enough. You weren’t good enough…

The choking feeling of guilt lingers every time Mary wakes up, sometimes screaming, sometimes crying, and her foster parents never seem to know what to say to make things better.

Then, when she’s nineteen, one dream begins to repeat on loop. Almost every night, at some point or another, a brown-haired little girl makes an appearance in the shared dream. Sometimes she’s alone;
sometimes she has an army of dead-eyed men behind her. Sometimes she seems out of place, standing in the middle of a flurry of everyday activity, staring at her—at Skye’s soulmate—with hatred in her eyes. Sometimes she’s standing in a pool of blood. Sometimes, she’s bleeding from a bullet hole through her heart.

Skye rarely gets to choose what happens next in those dreams. Sometimes her soulmate turns and runs. Sometimes her soulmate stands frozen.

One time, she speaks.

“I’m sorry,” Skye hears her soulmate’s familiar voice, but now it sounds constricted, like the words are punching themselves out of her throat. “I’m sorry.”

“You killed Mother,” the girl says in a horrifying sneer, reaching out with one hand. “Now give me your pain.”

This time, her soulmate raises a gun and shoots the girl dead.

Skye wakes up with a start, screaming into the darkness of the inside of her van.

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It has not escaped Melinda that she seems to be sharing dreams with a girl, a girl significantly younger than her, if the content of the dreams is anything to go by. By the time she’s been riding the desk at the Triskellion for five years, her soulmate has given her quite a few clues about who she is, but so many of the things she’s seen still confuse her. Why do nuns scare her soulmate so much? Why is there no one in her dreams that she calls Mom or Dad? Why is I’m lost still the most terrifying dream her soulmate has?

She gets her orders from Fury and joins Coulson’s team when he invites her to. Their very first mission, they pick up a brown-haired hacker with too much guts for her own good. Not long after that, her extra dreams start to change.

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Skye doesn’t regret her life of semi-crime one bit if it has landed her in a place where everyone calls each other “Agent.”

The revelation doesn’t even cross her mind until after their mission in Peru, when she’s finally interacted enough with the team on the plane to remember all of their names. They usually call each other by their last names, and when they don’t, it’s with the title of Agent in front of it. It only occurs to her when she hears Ward grumbling about Fitz and Simmons, how Coulson really should have thought about how his science team being soulmates might be more of a hindrance than a help…

For all the dreams she’s shared with her own soulmate by then, she has never managed to catch her soulmate’s name. Skye has heard plenty of people say the same thing—it’s some kind of rule in their universe apparently—you can see everything except your pair bond’s reflection in a mirror, hear everything except their name.

Ward only has time to give her a barebones amount of training before Skye finds herself running from danger at Quinn’s villa in Malta, far out of her depth but still, she knows, right where she’s supposed to be.

That night, she dreams about gunfire and plunging off the edge of a building into a pool far, far below. She doesn’t scream but still gasps aloud when she wakes up as she strikes the water.
In the bunk two doors away, Melinda awakens with a start.

Skye listens to conflicting stories about the Cavalry from Fitz, Simmons, and Ward without buying any of them. Sure, Agent May has proven herself capable and deadly, but riding in on a horse or taking out twenty men in a single strike still doesn’t seem quite like the truth.

Skye is sitting outside of the Cage’s door, trying to comfort the guilt-ridden girl with the supernatural stalker inside when the girl asks Skye in a trembling voice if she believes in God.

“Not really,” she admits, then explains to the girl what nuns had said in her past that made her not want to believe. A moment later, Agent May materializes out of the darkness, sending her up to Coulson’s office to help with the communications crash.

Up there, he tells her a different story of the Cavalry.

It doesn’t include the details, but something about the story feels familiar enough.

Downstairs, Melinda thinks of nuns and the terror they made her soulmate feel growing up. For the first time, she cracks the door on a certain possibility.

A few weeks later, a lapsed SHIELD agent tells her a story about an orphaned 084 found not far from a Chinese village razed to the ground, and the idea becomes more likely.

Two nights later, she dreams about herself.

Through her soulmate’s eyes, she sees herself sweeping in, saving the day, protecting her from danger and telling her she’s safe.

From then on, she knows for sure.

Skye has only been out of anesthesia for a single day when the combination of her pain meds and recent trauma make her wake up screaming.

She isn’t alone.

Agent May is there, leaning out of the darkness of the corner of her medical pod murmuring words of comfort.

“You’re safe, you’re safe,” she whispers, drawing her stool up to Skye’s bed and groping for her hand.

Skye squeezes it back gratefully, forcing herself to take a deep breath.

_Not bleeding out on the floor of a wine cellar._

_Not about to die alone._

_But I wasn’t alone…_
“It’s you, isn’t it?” she says, trying to meet May’s eyes in the dim light. “I saw myself. Almost dead. But it wasn’t me seeing myself—it was you seeing me.”

She half-expects May to dodge the question or outright deny it, but the woman surprises her.

“I think so. I was wondering when you’d figure it out.”

Annoyed but not necessarily surprised to learn that May is, as always, ahead of her, Skye holds on to the woman’s hand tighter.

“Why do you always dream about that girl?”

Even in the darkness, she can see the way this question fissures through May like a lightning bolt, and inside her grip, Skye feels the woman’s hand tense. For a second, she thinks May might be about to run, disappear like the shadow she’s been in the past, but instead, she sits frozen.

“I’m sorry,” she eventually whispers instead of answering. “I wouldn’t wish my dreams on anyone.”

“Me either,” Skye says, squeezing May’s hand gently.

They sit in silence for a moment, both tumbling the question of what this could mean for their future, and finally, Skye decides everything except the immediate can wait.

“This bed’s wide enough for two,” she says cautiously, catching May’s eye in the dim light. “And probably more comfortable than that stool.”

May gazes at her in the dark for a long moment with another unnamable non-expression, then stands, dropping Skye’s hand and walking out. For a second, Skye sits alone with a gut-punch of disappointment, but then May returns, carrying an extra blanket.

“Scoot over.”

It takes a little maneuvering to get them both comfortably in the bed without ripping off any of the lines and monitors Skye is still connected to, but eventually they make it work, with Skye tucked beneath one of May’s arms.

“What do we say if the others find us like this in the morning?” Skye says, resting her head on May’s shoulder.

“We say we had a nightmare,” May answers simply, barely holding on to Skye but still feeling like the soundest thing she’s ever touched.

It’s an answer that will lead to more questions, Skye knows, but for now, she doesn’t care. For now, she is content to close her eyes and rest against the woman beside her, knowing that when the nightmares come again, from now on, she won’t be alone.

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