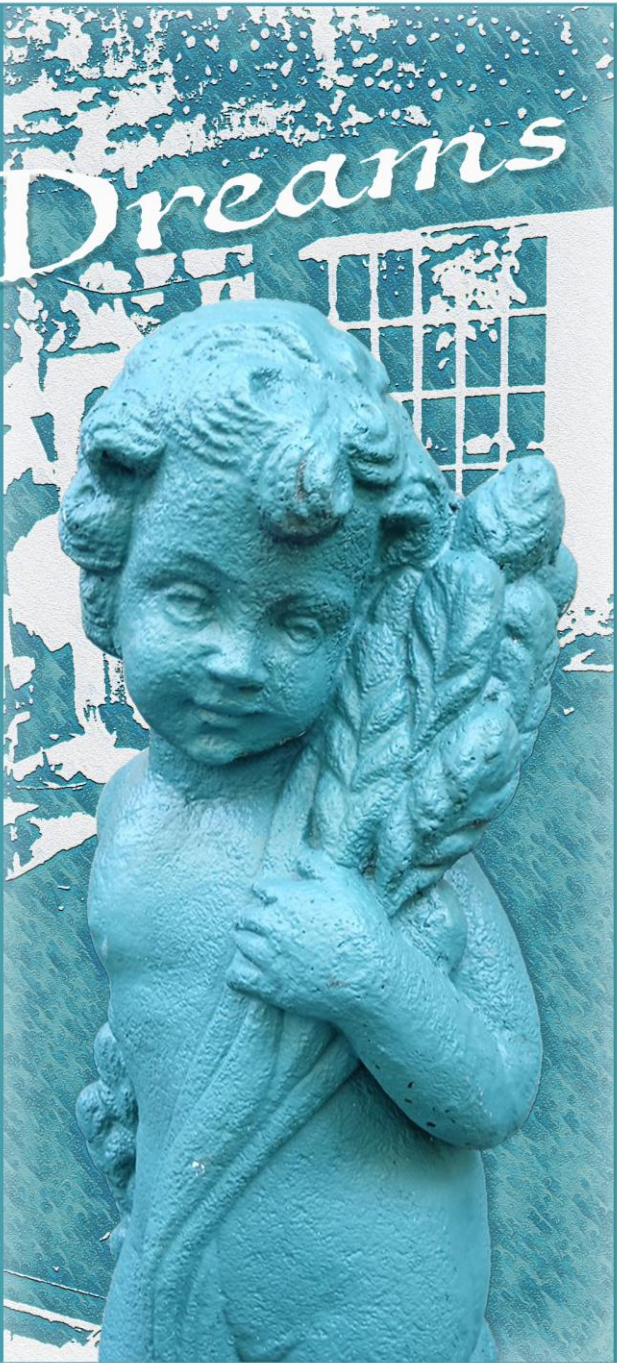


Volume 26

Dreams

sandhill review





Elaine Person



DREAMY FACE



sandhill review

Volume 26 • 2025

Founding Editors	Kurt Wilt Thomas Abrams
Editor-in-Chief	Gianna Russo
Editorial Assistants	Amberlyn Wedge Makayla Bech
Design and Layout	Jeff Karon

With Special Thanks to:

Dr. Chantelle MacPhee, Chair
Department of English, Music and the Arts
and
Dr. Heather Parker, Dean
College of Arts, Sciences, and Allied Services

sandhill review is produced by the students and faculty of the Saint Leo University Department of Language Studies and the Arts and published annually.

The editors invite electronic submissions only of poetry, prose, artwork, and photography annually. For more information contact sandhillreview@gmail.com.











Cover by Jeff Karon, from a photograph by Elaine Person.














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




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Gianna Russo



FOREWORD: DREAMS

Is what makes us human the ability to imagine, to create, to wish, to . . . dream? The contributors to this issue of *Sandhill Review* have as many answers to that question as there are definitions of the word “dream.”

The poetry, essays, stories, and artwork in these pages are a congregation of reveries, fantasies, visions, nightmares, musings, prayers, and joys. Here we have dreams as hopeful possibilities we mentally return to again and again, and dreams as respites from world-weariness. Dreams are experiences that are utterly unique and magical. Dreams are nightmares so terrifying they leave us breathless.

Dreams might be archetypes of universal truths; they might be deeply spiritual moments. Dreams are of this world, but also from beyond it, from some place mysterious and mystical.

Dreams nudge us in our deepest sleep and poke us in our most alert moments. Dreams exist in an almost-other reality, one that intersects with our waking world and maybe colors it.

Dreams are walls that crumble in our fingers and lace that holds back oceans. When we can practically touch the reality our mind is fashioning, that is dreaming.

Yoko Ono says, “A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.”

This issue brings contributors and readers together. Welcome to our reality. Welcome to our dreams.

Gianna Russo, Editor-in-Chief, Spring 2025



Tiffany Anderson



KEEPER OF DREAMS

In the heart of New Mexico, where mountains wear
their dusky shawls and the earth whispers secrets,
I found the dreamcatcher—its threads woven like time,
a circle of silence, soft in the early light.
Beads glinted, coy as the stars; feathers hung low
in colors only the desert knows—russet and ochre,
turquoise blue. It spun quietly,
danced like an incantation, as if it held something
only a woman could understand.

They say the dreamcatcher knows
how to sift the dark from the light,
how to weave hopes and dreams, refined from ash.
It carries stories in its loops, as a woman might—
her dreams stitched and stored, no room to waste,
held close for the times when the world is too vast
and indifferent, when she is alone with herself.

I grew up under New Mexico's brazen sky -
a girl too eager, too quick to dream,
longing to wrap herself in more
than adobe walls and mesquite shadows.
I wanted to chase something higher,
to catch knowledge, catch words
like fireflies between my fingers,
to taste books, wear ink, to know all that could be known.
And I wanted to love in ways that would spill
over, too fierce to be contained—
love so deep it would unearth something,
like water rising from a hidden spring.

Now, I see myself in that dreamcatcher,
threads woven to the shape of a life:
for every dream I chased, a bead;
for every ambition, a feather left like a prayer.
The weight of wanting, gathered and held—
each strand tied with faith, each color, a story
of persistence, of nights where I stayed awake,
searching the sky for something I couldn't yet name.

Here, at the edge of everything I hold dear—
education's burning promise, the honeyed gift of words,
a career with meaning, and love's unexpected light—
I know that I, too, am woven from the same spell.
A keeper of dreams, a vessel for longing,
living proof that what we desire fiercely enough
will be ours if we have the will to hold it.

Beneath a New Mexican sky,
I could feel myself stretch wide as the desert—
knowing that life *will* catch me
even as I reach beyond it,
woven into something far grander,
stronger than myself.

Lola Haskins



A TRUE STORY

The cashier at the Dollar Store told me that the dream-catchers on my shirt reminded her of when her brother used to sleep-walk into her room, and that he so clearly didn't know where he was terrified her so much she'd sit up, rigid, the rest of the night. It wasn't until, her mother hung a dream-catcher over her bed that she stopped being afraid. And now, at 18, a new hard thing was happening to her and she needed another one, so where did I get my shirt? I bent over to show her but the label, washed too many times, was blank. The next day, I came back with it and when the clerk at the front said Margie was on vacation for ten days, I put her name on the bag I'd put it in and gave it to him to keep for her. But two weeks later, when I went to check on Margie not only had the clerk I'd left it with forgotten about it, he couldn't remember where he'd put it. He felt around under various counters, and then, just as he was on the verge of giving up, he found it and Margie went to the rest room in the back to try it on. At which point I realized that I'd made a terrible mistake because Margie and I were such different sizes, the shirt was never going to fit. But when she came out of the restroom, I saw that not only did it only fit, it looked much better on her than it ever had on me. Which is how I know there are miracles. And that sometimes, when no one's looking, dream-catchers hide, all pleased with themselves, at the Dollar Store.

Jamal Fuller



A NARROW ROAD

In the middle of two roads, I stood—a choice would change my life forever. One road was dark at the start, but grew lighter at the end. The other was long, cold, and frightening, with no signs of hope. I was 18 years old, and the decision I made would define my path to adulthood.

Waking up in our inner-city house, I sat on the bed and yawned, already eager to escape the troubles within those walls. After getting dressed and putting on my only pair of shoes—worn-out Jordans—I walked into the bathroom. My mom, irritated by the noise, started yelling at me for the smallest things. Frustrated, I tried to ignore her and left for the bus stop.

At the corner, I saw Keith standing outside, wearing a tank top and smoking a Black & Mild. He greeted me, "What's up, Mally Mal? How's home life treating you?"

"It's alright," I replied, though the truth was far from it. "I really need a job, but my mom won't give me my socials to even apply for one. I need new clothes, and she won't give me any money."

Keith nodded, taking another drag. "I feel you, youngin'. If you ever need a job badly, I can hook you up." He pulled out five \$20 bills and handed them to me. "Get yourself something after school, but let me know if you want the job. Offer won't last forever."

At school, I walked into the JROTC room and put my backpack down. My chief instructor called me over, "Fuller, what's up, man? Let's have a talk." We stepped outside, and he said, "What's on your mind? Don't tell me nothing because I know something's bothering you."

I sighed and let it out. “Chief, I get kicked out almost every other day. My mom won’t give me my socials, and I have to find my own food and wash my clothes. I need money badly.”

Chief looked me in the eye, his tone serious. “I hear you, and I’ll help you because you shouldn’t be living like this. But it seems like there’s more going on.”

I hesitated before admitting, “Man, I’m thinking about selling that stuff. I don’t see another way to make money and survive.”

His face turned cold, and he said firmly, “You don’t want that life, Fuller. I’ve seen where it leads. You’re better than that.” I nodded, but I wasn’t sure I believed him. The streets had already taught me some harsh lessons, and I wasn’t ready for another lecture.

The next day, after a night spent sleeping outside, I walked into my guidance counselor’s office, tired and defeated. She smiled and said, “Have a seat.” Looking concerned, she continued, “I’ve heard that you’re homeless and have no place to stay. Is that true?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I said, trying to hold back tears. “I’m doing what I can, but I don’t always make the best choices. I need money just to eat.”

She nodded and said, “As a senior in high school, you shouldn’t have to live like this. There’s a program called *Starting Right, Now* that helps kids like you beat homelessness and find stability. Would you be interested?”

I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. “Yes, ma’am,” I said, finally feeling a glimmer of hope. “I’m ready to make a change.”

A week later, I moved into one of the program’s houses. I was nervous but determined to better my life. Now, as I sit in my dorm and reflect, I see how close I came to taking the wrong road. The path of destruction was easy to fall into, but with the help of people who believed in me, I chose the right road. Today, I tell my story to inspire others to make the same choice so they, too, can one day live out their dream.



Alexander Carmichael


ROAD

Gregory Byrd



TAINO GIRL, C. 1300 INVENTS PHILOSOPHY

Cool this afternoon, still in dry season,
before Boinayel brings rain
and Marohu calls for the sun and heat,
so I do not mind that mother has brought me
a palmetto basket of hand-sized whelks and conchs
and bid me pull the meat from them.

It's a daily task for girls.
The water turns gold and then red
as if warning of something to come.
The boy named after dolphins
walks past with a speared redfish
and I try not to notice him
until he has passed. I like the muscles
on the backs of his legs
and imagine how his arms would feel
around me.

As my aunt taught me, a conch hammer
shatters a spot on the shell
and I remove the gift of meat
to the pot with images of waves pressed on the side.
I put the shells back in the basket
and climb the midden mound
where I dump them among seasons of shells.

I have the thought that my search for what is inside
has built a mound and I can see
dolphin surfacing in the lagoons.
I hold one of the shells and think
this is how the world is—
you break a little hole in its shell
and you can look inside.
There's more than what anyone sees
from the outside.

I think of rain—

Marohu and Boinayel
of dolphin and osprey.
After the meal, I will ask
shaman about these things,
bring him this shell
with which I have shattered
the ceiling of the world.

— Marohu: Taino god of clear skies. Boinayel: Taino god of rain.

Valerie Crosswell



AT THE INN OF THE NUNS

—San Miguel de Allende, Mexico

She sleeps and a man burns
incense, candles. Shadows
flicker like souls
as she dreams

monks, trailing roots and jacaranda,
tunnel cobbled sheets,
wind sweeping the room,
a sigh of skirts

lifting. The saints have flown,
their niches empty,
wordless.

Patricia Campion



DEVIL'S GLEN, CO. WICKLOW

In Northern latitudes where you don't expect it
The remnants of an Irish rainforest hide
A secret patchwork of mosses lichens and rotting tree stumps
Long ago torn apart and tossed across the rugged land
In narrow vales
On dark hill slopes
Over rocky outcroppings
That won't show anywhere on the map
That no trail post points to

But if you trust the wind's whisper from your dream
Leave the path behind
You stumble upon them
Where your footsteps leave no marks
Where the birds and streams have grown quiet
Where miniature mushrooms light bright yellow fires

You hear the stones drumming an ancient spell
Your fingers sew back together
Strands of cold soaked moss fallen leaves blackened twigs
Then
Your eyes remember
How to spot the fairies through the mist

Alyssa Dufort



WHAT I WISH

If you would ask me what I wish
My answer isn't for me.
What people need: A gift
To change whereby we see.

If what we see is what we know,
Then seeing must have aim.
I wish the world would stop and slow:
Forever stuck. Observe.

Do not observe how dim the night,
But what the dark would feel.
Do not observe how bright the day,
But what the light could know.

Emily Kochanski



DEDICATED TO ALL THIS WORLD HAS GIVEN ME

Youthful whimsy replaced by woes and worries;
Determination deteriorated by doubts.

Best-laid plans have been laid to rest.

No more “Little Miss Sunshine.”
Look at me, I’ve gone invisible.
I am the Phantom in the wings, the “man behind the curtain”
I create art for the inconsiderate and otherwise occupied.

It is the world that ages us, not time.
Is this what life is? Oh, God, is this it?

The moment I wake to see that the sun has risen on another day
is the same moment I eagerly begin counting the seconds . . .

Minutes . . .

Hours . . .

Until, blessedly, it sets again.

At night I used to lose myself in the joy of dreams.

Now I only sleep.

Maeve Kiley



LAIKA

The strands connecting the constellations are thin. Fine, like a dog's hair.
The inkwell of space cradles the clustered space shuttle, one silent passenger chugging along in the
companionless sea of stars. For like salt water, no air can be found, and the stray's lungs grow
weak. But back on earth, the mutt's mother sleeps soundly; frozen beneath the street's snow, for its
daughter felt the warmth of a human touch even though it was the hands of her executioner,
strapping her down to die.
Another soul buried alive for the dream of a nation.



Shelbee Stephens



MOON

Shelbee Stephens



THE MOON

I think the moon is a lady who cradles the stars
and collects them in mason jars.

She gathers the glitter from the midnight skies,
holding them close, where their beauty lies.

I think the moon is wise and tells no lies,
her silver smile a soft disguise.

She makes every comet swoon and twirl,
a celestial dance in a starry swirl.

I think the moon dreams sweet things,
though I know she doesn't sleep a wink.
Her heart is full of quiet songs,
the kind that echo where no one belongs.

I think the moon screws those lids on right,
not too tight, but just enough to keep the light
from spilling out when the night is new,
like little secrets she's vowed to keep from
view.

I think the moon, with gentle grace,
guards the night in her silver embrace.
A lady, a keeper of light and lore,
whose love for the stars will last evermore.

Valerie “Ray” Eulett



THE TASTE OF BAD DREAMS

I often dream of waking up.

I haven't had nightmares in so long that I've forgotten what they taste like, that fear mixed with morning gunk. The closest I come is when I fall asleep shivering, when my body heat has yet to warm the plush cocoon I've buried myself in, when my toes numb no matter how much I wriggle them into the fabric. I wake up and the morning is still cold and my toes are still numb. I squirm like a tapeworm between tepid intestines and accidentally slam the wall. My roommate groans on the other side.

Fuck.

The light is low, the streetlight filtered through the blinds, yet I still can't see when I blink awake. I see the door and the ceiling and the red of my sheets and the inside of my eyes and I'm falling asleep again. I was dreaming, I think, the memories as sweet as they are forgettable, nonsensical. They're tainted with something bitter, though, something not un-foreign. I wonder why I so desperately want to return.

But I stay awake. Everything I touch is tainted with a numb haze, as if my fingertips fell asleep picking up my bra by the straps, and I feel no pain when the polyester shirt scrapes my bare skin. I think I dreamt I was a boy in 1985, tonight. I think it was 1985 like I think I'd be addicted to the cigarettes I dreamt I smoked if I ever tried them. I think I need to piss so I do.

I always use cold water to wash but today the water is not cold. Water splashes on my arms and stains my shirt and it reminds me of where an imaginary girl's hands pressed against my body to shove me away.

She broke up with me then peeled herself apart like a tangerine. There's a moldy tangerine in the fruit bowl I should throw away. I got up too late for breakfast, but early enough to check my email, and I got a seventy on my poem.

Shit.

I've never been much of a poet. Maybe that's why I've never been much in-tune with myself, never knew what really matters. I grab an apple on the way out because I'm hungry anyway. I'm outside in the warmthless sun walking to class and I'm on the steps, climbing upwards to something I don't know, wrapping my numb fingers around the handle, and the apple is gone from my grasp, uneaten, and I'm sure I'm grasping something meaningful.

But something's wrong.

Now I stand before the threshold between outside and in, reality and fantasy, what I am and am not, and stare into the reflective glass door and realize I look wrong — *am* wrong. The glass is a mirror and I see eyes that've seen everything I've seen, lips that've said everything I've said, and hands that've done everything I've ever done.

Everything is wrong.

I wake up. Maybe for real this time.

The blanket is coarse from hardened laundry detergent. I'm sweaty from the duvet, so I ease my leg from beneath it, the AC stinging with every inch exposed. The piano swells and the melody grates. I huff. I let my fingers trail down the cold, cold connecting wall. There is only silence on the other side; she's already left. Wawa slips litter the nightstand, and I sweep one off my phone to turn off the alarm. The piano jolts to an inharmonic stop, and I realize there's no email.

It was a dream. I lay in bed for thirty minutes more anyway, thinking of that 1985 dream.

When I wake up only to start again at the beginning —when I've lived an illusion of my life that's yanked away, leaving nothing but a fleeting dread— those are my bad dreams. I am not afraid, but that fearful nightmare flavor tastes strong when I wake up. My mouth tastes like nothing is quite right, like maybe nothing ever will be right, like maybe nothing I've ever done will matter once I wake up.

I am tired of sleeping. But not more than I am of being awake.

Jessica Swanson



TO THE NIGHT TERROR,

Or perhaps, really, to the paralysis demon,
who always stands in the leftmost corner of my once-bedroom at my parents' house—
they call it the guest room now (as you and I are reserved for pleasantries, short-term stays):
Anyway, dear paralysis demon who also sometimes stands—
or floats—in the leftmost corner of my own bedroom,
who daintily frequents the space above the sweetgrass, the incense, and the tarot
just beyond the reach of moonlight streaming through the window, my condolences.
I think that's what you want, right? Condolences. Apologies.
For refusing to acknowledge your clockwork visits
during eclipses and moon phases in sickness and health—
an uninvited guest determined to keep watch.
I know you sometimes mimic cryptic promises back to me
in my own voice in the dead of night about death and what should happen if I—
Anyway, my darling, sorry.

I think perhaps you're jealous, honestly—
that you can't take something slightly more...well, affectionate,
than an amorphous form: a universe crammed in a corner.
That you can only listen to the guided meditations or lay beside me
and gaze with huge, sightless eyes at my face until I sink valerian-drunk
into dreams of spirit guides who pull me close and stroke my hair,
softly digging fingertips into my side.
And I don't remember their faces, either, you know.
Or their names—or the loving whispers.
Just a tightening grip as I'm pressed against someone's chest harder
(and harder.)

A fleeting reminder of how fragile I am and how uncouth it must be
to ask for general messages, a sign, a bell ringing out into the stillness
to prove the existence of some realm, something beyond myself
when you are right there across from me—
or worse, pressing in next to me—you know?
Perhaps you are one in the same:
a mute thing accidentally summoned to offer a voyeur's comfort,
unsure of what form to take.

Dustin Buxton



THE WONDERFUL NIGHTMARE

Thomas walked out the back door and looked into the yard. The gathering of friends and family present separated into groups as they began to socialize. The younger ones gathered around Thomas' two grown children. Max was eighteen and just graduated high school. Violet would turn twenty-four in a few weeks and just graduated from college. The celebration was for the both of them. Their respective friends talked uproariously, happy at their accomplishments. Thomas couldn't understand half of what they said; the current slang escaped his comprehension. Regardless, all of the kids seemed pleased, which satisfied Thomas.

Keith, Thomas' younger brother, was at a large grill that bellowed hickory smoke and smelled of cooking beef. Keith always took pride in his ability to barbecue for the family even though half the time he would almost blow himself up because of his absurd use of lighter fluid. Even though there was no cook-out disaster this time, the smoke was becoming thicker, obscuring Thomas' vision slightly. Keith was bragging loudly to anyone who would listen over his culinary skills, both real and especially those imagined.

Thomas walked to the porch swing and sat down, carefully avoiding knocking over a glass that had been left forgotten in the cupholder. He began to rock back and forth in the swing to ease himself further. As he pushed his glasses back into position, he surveyed the whole scene. Again, the children continued joking with their friends. Keith was now attracting some of the younger children, who were becoming impatient waiting for the food and were innocently enthralled by his bedazzling bullshit stories.

Finally, Thomas' vision shifted to a smaller group of children surrounding Ella, his wife. Ella was reading out of a book to the

attentive audience. He smiled silently as he watched Ella's willowy frame animate with her storytelling, remembering her doing the same for the children when they were young. Thomas' smile broadened as he watched everyone, especially Ella. He blanketed himself in pride at everything that life had blessed him with. As he settled further in the porch swing, a big cloud of smoke came from the grill as Keith sprayed more lighter fluid on the fire. Reeling from the smoke, Thomas waved vigorously, which knocked the glass out of the cupholder. The glass shattered loudly on the porch.

* * *

Thomas heard the shattered glass and jumped with a start. He sat up in his bed. The sheets and comforter were faded and threadbare with age. The harsh light of a table lamp left neglected on a nightstand made him squint in discomfort. He clawed for his glasses on the stand and shoved them on his face. Only his bedroom, worn with neglect and disrepair, greeted him. He was alone and always had been. He looked down to see the glass that he used for his nightly medicine in pieces on the floor. Through the ancient blinds, police beacons shone through the window. With a sigh, he got out of bed, went to the bathroom and relieved himself.

Putting on a robe that was at least fifteen years old, he walked through his decrepit apartment to the kitchen, opened a cabinet, grabbed a box of dry cereal and a bowl, then filled the bowl. He ate the cereal dry. Thomas sat in silence as he ate, hearing the muffled, unintelligible speech outside. Returning to his room, he opened his closet to take out a security guard's uniform. The captain's bars on the collar only reminded him of everything at work being his fault, rather than any sense of accomplishment. As he got dressed, the dream that he had began to gnaw at it him tortuously. A wife, family and a good home. His heart sank.

Thomas grabbed his uniform cap and his car keys. He left his apartment and locked the door. Outside in front of him was a 1988 Plymouth Horizon, the car he had bought as a young man, which

now showed just as much harsh age as his visage. The beacons from the police car across the parking lot pierced the darkness as officers cordoned off one of the apartments with crime scene tape. A neighbor was in the back seat of the cruiser yelling obscenities.

Thomas opened his car, got in, cranked the engine, and drove away. As he drove towards his job, a dark melancholy filled him tinged with rage and hate beyond human expression.

“Why did I have to wake up?!” he thought in despair.

Kayla Caicedo



NIGHTMARE OF A FALLEN STAR

In the stillness, it settles in slowly,
A creeping shadow I barely know.
It breathes with me, thick and near
A nightmare voice that feeds on fear.

I face the mirror, cold, naked, and bare,
Tracing shapes that shouldn't be there.
Every curve feels out of place,
A stranger's body, a stranger's face.
Its voice whispers, close yet far

“You're too much, a fallen star.”

It points to the flesh, it counts each flaw,
I feel it watching, sharp and raw.
My body feels too loud, too wide,
With nowhere soft to hide.
It shows me lines, each dreaded trace,
A prison in this mirrored space.

In daylight hours, it walks with me,
A ghost of shame I can't unsee.
Its words are daggers that I can't retrieve,
Pulling at doubts I can't train.
It tells me I am less, not whole,
Its darkness seeping, filling soul.
A shadow near, a haunting blur
A nightmare's weight I can't deter.

I wake to breathe, to face the sun,
But its voice remains never gone
It stays within, a watchful eye,
A shadowed truth that won't deny.

Angeliki Thomas



SLEEP PARALYSIS

I am running through the flea market, my legs moving slower than my brain wishes they would. The smell of mildewy cigarette smoke and wet dog hair is choking me. My Doc Martins are imprinting deep holes into the muddy ground. My body is fighting as hard as possible to catch up with my family.

“Mom!” I scream out helplessly. Every turn I make around the decade-old, dry-rotted tables is a mile that moves between me and my mother. I’m falling farther and farther behind. And suddenly I am awake. It was another bad dream.

I lie in my warm bed and stare at the wall with a pit of anxiety fading in my chest. I am home and my mother is somewhere around the house. I hear her pass by my room as she always does early in the morning. Carrying a large pile of clean laundry, she comes strolling into my bedroom as I lie on my bed still and silent.

I force out a question from my dry mouth. “Mom?” She doesn’t respond. “Mom I had a nightmare that I couldn’t get to you.” I sit up in my bed and watch her. She glides over to me after putting my laundry away and gives me a great big hug.

“Don’t worry, sweetie. I’m here.”

My “mother” then rips off all her skin, exposing razor sharp nails and teeth and the demon hiding within. The grey, hairless creature contorts its face and lunges at me. The demon clutches my wrists and bites as hard as it can. I can’t fight it; it’s too strong. My stomach wrenches with horror as I wish for the nightmare to end. I wait for my death as the evil entity takes its course.

I awaken in my bed. Horrified. I try to move my legs. They aren’t moving. I whip my eyes around my bedroom, hoping the demon won’t return and take advantage of my soul, while my body

is frozen to my mattress. I try to remain calm and clear my mind. Slowly and fearfully my soul rests back down into my body. I awaken a final time trembling with fear.

Now that I am fully conscious my mind starts to spiral out with confusion. I rub my eyes with the palms of my hands, while I try to sort out the traumatic scene that I have revisited for the third time in a row. Each time the demon disguises itself in the husk of a loved one I confide in.

These nightmares do not surprise me anymore. I know my body is trying to tell me that I am under too much stress. The comfort that I get from my loved ones cannot stop the feelings that bubble inside me. I do not know where these feelings have come from, but I do know the overarching atmosphere of dread is poisoning my mind. The only thing I can do to remedy these nightmares is to go to church and eat oranges in the sun until the pang of dread passes through my system.



Jeff Karon



**PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST
IN THE SLEEPING CITY**

Harmony Curry



DREAMING BLURS REALITY

I never know when I've fallen asleep. It's as if when I close my eyes, I'm only aware of the dark of my eyelids, then suddenly there's a snap and I'm under.

My dreams are not dreams, they are memories. So vivid, I feel as if I'm awake somewhere else. In reality I am tangled in my blankets, my pillow on the floor, and my iPad showing the 'Are you still watching?' screen from Netflix.

There is no true blackness; there are memories, memories that have never happened.

I remember when I lived in worlds of blurry-faced people: an unrecognizable man who dances with me in large empty rooms, the ticking of a clock matching the tapping of our feet. I remember when I lived with a group of unnamed friends, cooking in an apartment I've never seen before.

I remember when I got away, or I dream I got away. I dream of getting away from the darkness that keeps a sharp grip on my shoulders, convincing itself that the touch is comforting, when in reality it is suffocating.

I dream that someone cuts those foggy and hard to see hands off of me, brushing the remnants of them from my shirt and complimenting my outfit, my jewelry. That someone compliments things I didn't know I had on me, and I'm focused on how they saved me.

The noise out of their mouth falls on deaf ears as I try to recognize their expression, and their arms wrap around me in a hug. A hug where my head buries into their chest and for once I can breathe.

Then I wake up.

Even though I swing my feet over the side of my bed, even though I hit the ground . . . I don't feel awake. I get dressed, brush my teeth, pack my bag, but it never feels real.

The day passes too quickly for it to be real. Why am I so tired?

Are my dreams really dreams, or is dreaming when I wake up? Do I even wake up?

I don't know when I've fallen asleep, but I know which one I prefer. I prefer when I feel safe and when time feels slower, regardless of whether people's faces smear like paintings. Paintings that a younger me would be ecstatic to live in. Life is better when I'm floating and laughing, living through a life I've never believed in enough to pursue.

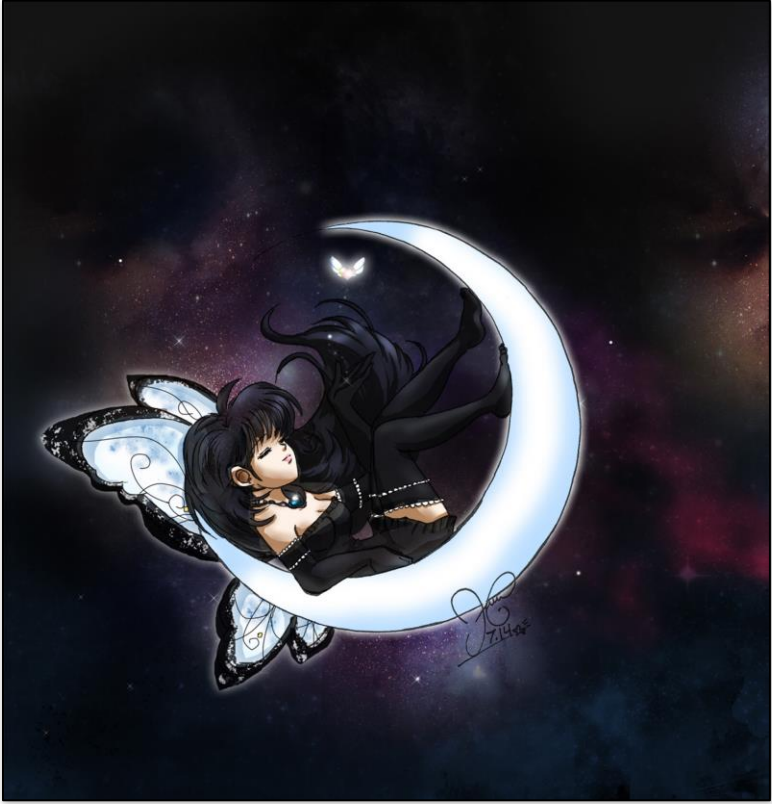
That life has small reminders that it's not real, and I try to ignore it. I try to ignore the black choking fog seeping through the cracks of the brightly lined images. I know I can't, but I still try.

I try to ignore that it is all in my head, but I can't. I can't ignore that I don't have a best friend, I can't ignore that I don't have a lover, I can't ignore that I am alone.

In reality, I am alone.

Oh, but in my dreams, I am known. People know my favorite color, my favorite song. Strangers dance with me and play games, even if they're tired because they just want to be with me. They make me feel as if I really belong with them.

So even if I don't know what's a dream and what's reality. Even if I prefer the dream version of myself, is that really so wrong?



Janna Correa

TRANQUILLITATIS

Janna Correa



LODGING IN SOMNIORUM

moon,

i once dreamt i went to the

g a red ladder
n as high and sturdy as
i my dreams of the vast space
b that was my future,
m with as many stars.
i
l some of those little
c metallic studs of light were
goals;
some, just the scenery i could see
out my lunar hotel room window.
my view, framed by snowy diaphanous
drapes, was the blue marble I call home—
the whole world in one glance—
and the overwhelming feeling of
expectation made me flop back
onto the chalk-toned bedding
for more visions.

Gyllian Ervin



SONNET OF LUCID DREAMS

The waves flood in, they crash over the sands.
Distorted thought of what has never been.
The crimson blue, its want to swallow lands,
The untamed danger waiting to begin.

The nightmares always go the exact same,
The waiting, waves, and then the crushing weight—
The scene repeats like some sick kind of game.
The water swells up at alarming rates.

Each night the fight lasts longer than it should,
Pushing past the point of reality.
Drowning me slowly, I'd scream if I could.
Each night, reaching for the same broken tree.

Screaming, I awaken from this hellscape,
Greeted by the radiant blue moonscape.

Aдриanna Astudillo



THE 4 STAGES OF SLEEP

NREM STAGE 1

Our eyes adjust to the dark,
and we whisper under the sheets,
share stories of the past
and fortunes of the future.
The state of eternal grace.
Love for you is platinum in this moment
and I can finally doze off.

NREM STAGE 2

There's a shadow of something unsaid.
And I feel the urge to the move away from your warmth.
There was silence when your lips met mine—
What did you need to say to me?
The sleep spindles come in bronze waves
and the invisible thread between us becomes thinner.
Questions pepper my unconscious mind.
Are you the music that invades my heart
Or the ghostly whispers that fill my soul?

NREM STAGE 3

Is this love or is this hunger?
You offer a chalice of ambrosia, and I'm worried.
Sometimes, the veil of reality pierces through me
and I must remember all the pain I once carried
when your name was a hex that rolled off my tongue.
You are a poison that I can't stop swallowing.
My dreams reveal that you are the monster that holds me
but I love to wear your handprints on my body like landmarks.
You are the dark that I crave.

REM SLEEP

It's easy to find versions of our love in this phase.
You play a role of many and I'm conflicted
to wake up in a world where you play the stranger.
I think your face is starting to blur as a blizzard shapes
my last dream and leaves me in a wake of silver goodbyes.

Peter M. Gordon



DREAMING AGAIN

One night I lay in bed
counting a Noah's Ark
of animals to summon
sleep, but found when

my sheltie scratched at
mattress and woke me,
I dreamed it. Can one
dream about waking?

Dreams are mysterious.
Does my soul stay in body
or does it roam to other
worlds along with my mind?

Will it drop ethereal blazes
to light its way back to body?
If one night mystic breezes
extinguished that trail,

would another soul inhabit
my body? Would my wife
notice I no longer knew where
we kept silverware or serving

dish? Would my soul search on,
land in a parallel world where
we had five children, not three?
Maybe that world will also be

a place everyone lives best lives
in warm homes, happy families,
plenty of books, food, board games,
In that world, I think I would stay.

Janet Watson



FALLING ASLEEP WITH A BOOK

but not wanting to stop,
I push my weary eyes to the next line
and beg them to read on.
But my vision hangs forever
on the hook of a comma,
and the sentence spins senselessly.

Lulu, the main protagonist
in this novel, now sits on my bed,
though she should be in Marrakesh,
managing the confusion
of being a double agent. Of necessity,
I seem to have assumed her assignment,
for I am wandering through the stalls
of the Kasbah, where
the calls of carpet-vendors
and the aromas of mutton and peppers,
grilling on charcoal braziers,
remind me that I'm lost.
The face of a camel-driver
breaks into wrinkles of laughter
when I ask him, *Am I dreaming?*
In dreams I'm always losing my way.

I wake up beneath a comforter's soft lumps,
my neck twisted on the pillow,
a book splayed open on my chest.
What happened to the resourceful heroine
of my dream? I was so foolish
and unreliable, reading into wee hours,
when so much depended upon
being alert and fully aware this morning
and for the rest of the day,
through clandestine meetings in which
I must discover the seller of secrets
before the end of the book.



Alexander Carmichael



DOGS SLEEPING

Makayla Bech & Heaven Nazario



HOPE MET ME IN A DREAM

Dreams come in many vibrant colors.
But yours are monotonous monochrome.
You are stuck in the ghostly liminal space,
Of soul-sucking black and wilting white.

Floating down the lazy river of life,
You watch your hopes and dreams fly by,
Leaving you by the watery wayside.
The vultures circle closer and closer.

You welcome them with open arms.
They tear your skin with frantic fervor.
You pay them no mind, for you are past
The point of caring if you live or die.

(But you heard a soft whisper in a dream)

Balladry flows freely in your mind.
Let the sun's glow caress your skin.
Warmth will defeat the cold inside.
Let it melt your glacial soul.

Hopes and dreams ignite flames.
Rise like a phoenix and soulfully sing,
Verses of prose your mind creates.
Let sadness inspire, not conquer.

Internally you feel like a tragedy
Straight from Plath's deathly diary,
Write down your fears and dreams,
Your words are meant to be perceived.

Rays of sun hit the stream's surface.
Let the torrid water rise above your face,
Let it calm your lyrical mind beneath,
But before death, lift your head up, scream.

Amberlyn Wedge



I WISH TO DREAM: A GOLDEN SHOVEL

Fainter than hushed feet,
Stealing through my hazy dream,
Snow—
In the midnight woods.

Jun Fujita

The noises outside grow fainter
by the minute. Quieter than
the dimly lit TV, playing hushed
lo-fi music. I feel your cold feet
against my leg. We each keep stealing
the blanket. I weave my hand through
your hair; I'm feeling your dreams. My
eyes don't shut. I'm stuck awake with hazy
memories flashing in my head. I wish to dream
as you do. I want to wake up telling you about snow
in an evergreen forest. I just toss and turn; you trap me in
your arms. You whisper to me to fall asleep, and you rub the
middle of my back. You say you don't care that it is midnight.
That you'll stay awake until I fall asleep to the dream of the woods.

Elaine Person



LIFE

(A TRIOLET)

Don't let the day in yet, my friend
For you must hold on to your dreams
 Don't let your evening's slumber end
Don't let the day in yet, my friend
The sun will tempt you, but do not bend
 The hour comes faster than it seems
Don't let the day in yet, my friend
 For you must hold on to your dreams.

Peter M. Gordon



KICKER

He practices alone, perfecting his approach
to the oblong football so when he kicks
with all the strength in his body channeled
to the right side of his right foot the ball

will fly up and over a straining, sweating,
wall of linemen toward goalposts thirty,
forty, fifty yards away. Imagine your heart
pounding if you sprinted that distance.

If he persists through high school, college,
Training camps, combines, tryouts, he may
join that select fraternity of thirty-two specialists
who make their living kicking field goal

and extra points in the NFL. Pro football linemen
are behemoths—six and a half feet tall, three hundred
muscled pounds. After the ball's snapped back
to the holder nine of them savagely attack

kicker's protecting linemen, to break through,
block the kick, maybe maim the kicker.
Holder places ball just right, loosely with
index finger. Kicker dreams about the perfect

kick, shuts out smacks, slaps, screams of linemen,
crowd catcalls, smell of sweat, fear of failure,
to focus on where foot will meet ball, head down
at impact, don't look up until ball's on its way.

He visualizes football splitting the uprights,
only eighteen feet wide, at least ten feet above
turf. If he's even half a second slow the edge rusher,
always unblocked, can get a finger on the ball,

ruin the attempt and maybe, his career. Yet the best
put so many points on the board that even analysts,
former players all, can look at this miracle of human
achievement and call it automatic.



Alexander Carmichael



SOCCER

Gregory Byrd



THE CUT

On those days when I break from my desk or from traffic
or find my mind not on the growling lawnmower,
this is what I remember of home.

The cut is white like the sand all around it, then dark
as it gains depth. The water flows fast, currying eddies
and veins of viscous transparency, though the salt water
all moves at speed as it rushes from north to south
finding its only easy way across the half foot deep flat
through this crooked cut. You cannot row north
through the cut but you might sail it in a fast sloop
on a reach. In my juvenile skiffs

I ran the little outboards wide open
just to inch forward. Below, noses into the current
the big mangrove snapper, the crawfish
held the sides of the cut, and pinfish and greenbacks
drifted through with the current.

So clean in the way that memories are clean,
I run through that cut over and over in big powerboats
and small skiffs, with the current and against
during late afternoon and late at night
where I knew just how to bank my father's boat
before the markers would shine in the spotlight.
This place comes like a spirit and comes when I call it,
white clear place, cool and deep
between the two shallow sides of my life,
its own theology.

Valerie “Ray” Eulett



IN THE CREEK

sometimes i rest at the bottom of a creek,
chin on my knees, letting the sharp sting
of chilled water trickle and seep into my jeans

like a stone i sleep on the creek bottom
waiting as tides rise and fall above me,
another pebble pulled along by the current

close my eyes. i dream of walking free
without breaking the water's surface,
not a ripple disturbing this disquieting stream

dream of reaching into sand and dirt below
to sketch distant city skylines, free of creeks,
free of cold waters and even colder feet

then i tire of dreams.

i wish to no longer feel the chill of the creek,
to no longer be a stone tied to its whims,
to walk to distant shores without getting wet

i dream i'd never walked into the creek,
of living like i'd never known its uneasy cold.
but maybe now i finally don't need to dream

maybe i'm already free.

Randy Goggin



**NIGHT PADDLING THROUGH A *PYRODINIUM*
BLOOM IN THE GULF OF MEXICO**

My dipped oar sparks their cerulean light,
Primeval explosions alerting the night;
Their luciferase-based signals of bioluminescence
spotlight my macro-invasive presence -
a night heron grunts, lifts off into flight.

Again, my oar plunges—like my own cleansing rite;
mullet leap along the shoreline, just out of sight.
Pyrodinium tumble down, leaving a faded effervescence.
My dipped oar sparks their cerulean light.

Back on land, people stir, divided they fight,
while a clown king juggles buzz words for a militant right,
stoking flames of fascism in a drunken, herd-level fervescence;
I escape the chaos, recentring on their ephemeral essence,
Again, they're fading, becoming one with the night...
My dipped oar sparks their cerulean light.

Cheryl A. Van Beek



ON THE OTHER SIDE

Your name sparkles in sand
that polishes my soles
like sea-glass.
Scalloped foam fizzes.
Ocean breathes your voice.
Time devours
the bench we shared.
Piercing shrieks—
seagulls reminisce.
Loss salts my tongue
sweetened by sun.
Colors melt over waves
that keep our secrets.
Sea swells, coils, uncoils,
brings me tidings—
briny, broken, smooth, shiny.
I see you
where ocean splashes the horizon,
laps infinity's edges.



Renee Gould



SUNSET

Cheryl A. Van Beek



REVERIES OF SEA AND LAND

Unlike Salvador Dali,
when I sleep,
I do not hold a spoon in my hand
waiting for it to drop
into a metal bowl
and wake to the clank--
the weight and shape of my dreams.

Instead, I am a Queen Parrot Fish,
magenta and tangerine
straddling the reef's drop off
into perpetual blue.

My body is rhythm.
It sways,
hypnotizes waves
the way ocean, obeying the moon,
walks backwards from shore.
My feet spring on blue sponge sky.
The sea is an aquarium above my head.
I read the history of sand grains
in each facet.

I fire walk flaming poppies,
stroll the brushstrokes of irises
picked from Van Gogh's indigo.

My grounded feet, magnetize
to earth,
compass my path
through the forest
of today.

Adrianna Astudillo



A MAN AND HIS HEARTBREAK

Out here it looks like a graveyard
and the gardens all ash.
In the distance, against the grey sky
I can see a white dove escaping the ruin before me.
I know you are the colorless dove venturing away from my grasp.
You claimed to yearn for my love with your mute mouth,
my brown-eyed dear.
You treat my love like a loan;
the words valuable, but loyalty must be foreign to your ears.
The false promises you make must keep you up at night.
I can imagine you counting them off your delicate fingers.
What excuse will you fly away with?
Please ask yourself, my dove.
Look in a mirror and study your flawed features,
your vanity reflecting the myth of Narcissus,
obsessed with a version of yourself that I can never touch.
Dove, I ask you in moments of silence when the breeze whispers
between the withered trees of this graveyard:
Are your wings taking you further
from this lifeless garden or me?
I see it in your eyes, an answer that you've learned to wear.
And I see it in your body language that you've been starting the
dance of distance.
Dove, where have you gone?

Dale Smrekar



DREAMS OF A SANDHILL CRANE

Look at my mate, sitting tall and resolute upon our nest on a small spit of mud and grasses at the edge of a lake. It is a simple, unadorned nest, lacking large branches or twigs, which allows her to reposition our one precious egg whenever she chooses. Her long, silver, gray neck sparkles in the morning sun, as she quietly sits and waits out the end of days, until our egg hatches.

Isn't my mate so beautiful? I'm so proud I chose her. Well, that's not the truth. She chose me. I had to dance like a whirlwind on my tall Sandhill Crane legs to gain her affection—wings spread and arced, twirling about, neck curled, then elongated, then curled once again. I hopped, jumped, and threw small sticks in the air. My dance seemed to last forever. She noticed and joined in. The other suitor looked on, but he's no match for my flamboyance. She moved closer. Our necks intertwined.

She is mine for life. I did well. I still dance for her during mating season and sometimes for no reason at all. My chest bursts with pride.

We nest here by the lake this year because it is a peaceful land of plenty. Tubers, aquatic plant roots, grubs, small amphibians, reptiles and small mammals such as rats and mice keep us nourished. A nearby man provides what our peaceful lake does not—daily scoops of corn, sunflower and other seeds. Sometimes when we've danced, he joins us, flapping his arms like wings, twirling about, hopping and leaping into the air and grabbing and throwing small twigs. We think he is silly, but we can't tell him. We are Sandhill Cranes. All we can do is honk. But we appreciate his effort and dance with him.

Now, we wait for the special day, when our small down-covered offspring will emerge from its egg and our life cycle will be repeated

over and over during the next twenty or so years of our life span. It's called the circle of life.

My beautiful mate sits upon her nest, her red cap upon her head. Soon, she will once again soar over the landscape, the ponds, pine and cypress trees. Turning into the elevating breeze, she will glide over humans, their homes and vehicles as she lives her best dream life as a beautiful Sandhill Crane. My beautiful Sandhill Crane. Watch her soar.

Mary Gail Russ



DREAMS OUR LITTLE CANARY

Dreams our little canary in the mind shaft of life
What secrets do they hold
They live in between the worlds
In a dimension we live through every day,
Yet cannot understand
They loop us through our darkest fears
Leaving us exhausted by sleep
And yet
They can solve the riddles we face in the wake
Unable to see the solutions
This mysterious part of our being
Something we all do
Yet still do not understand

Valerie Crosswell



BONES LIGHT

From my summer bed I could have lifted all the way up
to the raw beams

and drifted bones light
in the breath of that house,

smell of sea brine crossing the transom,
the silence of shuttered streets,

my mother's hair tangled red on the pillow,
her face blurred from swimming the dark,

pink curl of my sister's fingers,
the coverlet's lazy swell,

and my grandmother stirring, a sigh
as she surfaced from sleep and stillness

gathered me, time slowing to a quiet so deep
I could have entered the spacious unseen.

Joel Murray



A WYOMING DREAM OF NEW YORK

Great Grandpa Mike sleeps in a small, dark room, not expected to live much longer. Even in the dream I knew this was off, that he'd died in New York soon after I'd graduated from high school in Florida. A few family members wait in the outside room. Music trickles from a small stereo on a shelf in the dark room, nothing that Great Grandpa Mike would enjoy.

The others send me in. The mood outside was somber, but somebody was trying to lighten things up, cheer us, and the backpack on my right shoulder bumps against something as I walk through the door. I craft an impromptu, clumsy joke about my clumsiness to my cousin just before I step into the room, into the opportunity to tell someone things I didn't get to say.

Inside, the music's even annoying to me. I look at the stereo and then over at Great Grandpa dozing in a chair. His eyes open and fix on me. Then he frowns at the stereo: "That doesn't have to be on, does it?"

I shake my head no and look over at the stereo, an off-brand relic from the early 90s with AM/FM radio, cassette, CD, and too many buttons with cryptic, faded labels. There's not time to waste figuring out which button or knob grants silence. I glance at the outlet. Two cords. One of them to unplug, and then we can talk.

Outside the dream, my phone rings. Grandma is calling from next door, and she wakes me with, "Good morning, Grandson, look out in the field. Twenty deer right outside your window eating breakfast!"

Randy Goggin



**A CHILDHOOD MEMORY,
WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN A DREAM**

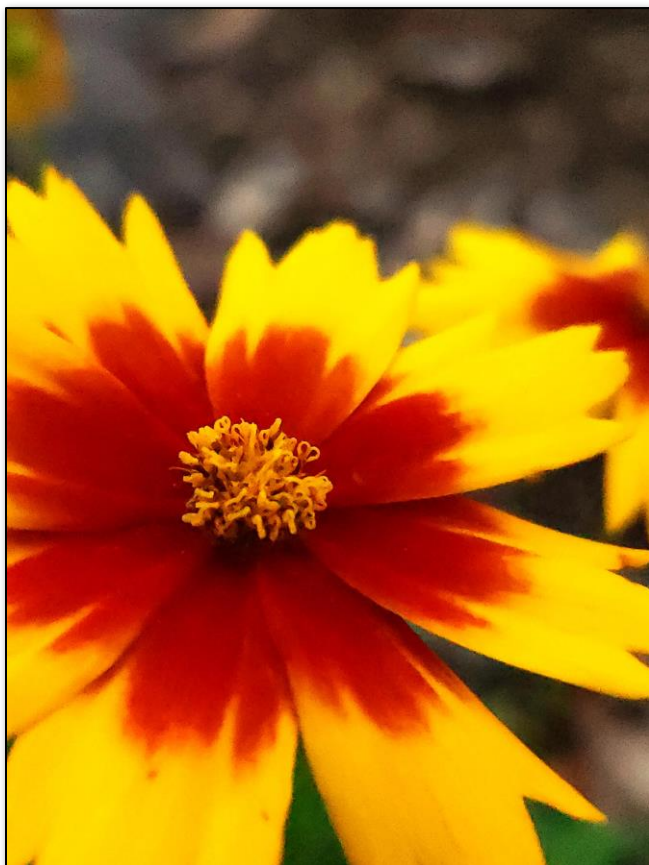
It was drinking hour
and we were fishing the Pithlachascotee River.
A single street light fleshed out the details
of the docks, parking lot, and overflowing dumpster;
the river was a black basin of undisturbed brackish water,
with the idea of fish beneath the surface
that we could theoretically catch.

I stood on bare feet between seawall and busted parking bumper,
beside a vague shape of a soggy box of frozen squid,
a rod in hand, and my bait in the water,
while dad set a square piece of squid on Jeff's hook,
with a Budweiser bottle tucked between elbow and hip;
Rick told dirty jokes in slurred phrases on one limping leg,
and mom wasn't there, despite her and dad still being married.

It was quiet beneath the stars,
with no cars out on Grand Boulevard
and gentle jerks on my line that made me reel in
a hook emptied of its squid every time.
If this memory was real, it could have been pinfish,
small sheepshead, or speckled catfish that did it.
And Dad didn't have his beer belly nor balding head of red hair,
nor an injured back, and he wasn't yet
the physical and psychological threat that we knew.

I pivoted back to cast the bait out into the id of still water,
but this time there was resistance of something larger
It tugged back with a force as strong as my own,
wriggling back and forth and attempting to break free.
Finally, I'd caught something I could reel in and show off.
Dad was shouting his excitement as I set the hook
even deeper - but something in the directional force
was not right; it was pulling away
instead of toward the river itself, and dad's shouts
had become curses that shattered
the fragile quiet of the Pasco County night.

Then I saw my father holding his eye with one freckled fist,
with monofilament line wrapped around a thick fish-like shape
of scars and Anglo-Saxon knuckles. And the fear flooded in,
with anticipation of what would happen next (if it were a dream,
this would have been the moment when I woke in my bed),
but I didn't as Rick Voss hobbled over to help,
letting out his own curses, and shaking his head of long hair.
Get your ass home, dad said when his dark eyes locked onto mine,
a hook clamped between two bloody fingers – and I ran,
as if swimming off in Darwinian flight.



Renee Gould


HEART

Joana Xipolitas


DREAM

Alexia awoke with a start, cheeks drenched in tears, as she gasped in air through her sobs. The dream again.

She hates this dream.

In the dream, she sees her father standing alone in the center of a museum. Nothing is around him as he stands there in the middle of the space, elevated on a circular platform.

He looks up. Light floods the platform, shrouding her father in a thick ray of glorious opaque light. Her father's hand reaches, rising higher, extending toward the heavens that have seemed to open up to him.

She stands somewhere on the second floor of this museum; only a cold metal railing stops her from falling. She leans deeper into the railing. From there, all she can do is watch, feeling nauseous, feeling helpless, feeling sorrow.

He did not look sick to her. He looked just as he always did, perfectly normal: his tanned, olive skin, healthy and plump; his black mustache, thick and groomed; his colorful button-down Hawaiian shirt, his blue jeans and signature Panama Jack hat resting on top of his head.

It started to worry her how much this light had such a hold on him; how all he seemed to want was this light. And as his gaze lifted, as his arms outstretched, so did the panic rise in her.

She screamed out, "Daddy no! Don't leave me!"

But his ears were deaf to her. His focus was solely on the light.

Again, she screamed out, louder and harder, "Daddy no! Don't leave me!" She whimpered, "*Please.*"

It seemed no matter how she plead, screamed, cried, or shouted, there was nothing that could stop this from happening.

She needed to get to him. The girl wanted to jump from the second floor to grab him and shake him out of this trance. She wanted him to look at her face; to see the sadness in her soul.

Then would he stay? Would a father stay with his little girl if she forced him to look at her? Would he choose her over this light?

If only he would just look at her.

He didn't.

He never did in this dream. His gaze was set upward, and nothing would ever change the outcome.

All this little girl could do was clench the cold railing with her small, eight-year-old hands until her knuckles turned white, and weep. She would weep, silently begging him to stay until the moment she watched through cloudy eyes as he dissipated into the brilliance, becoming one with the light.

Confusion, fear, emptiness, loss is what this dream consistently leaves behind, haunting her thoughts. Her insides hurt after this dream, her heart weeps well after the sun has come up.

She never once dared to speak this dream aloud, fearing it would come to pass if spoken into the universe. She did not want her words to be the reason the dream came true. So, she tucked it all far back into the recesses of her mind, hoping that the words would die and never return.

Some believe that dreams are a foresight into the future. Others believe that demons infiltrate our dreams casting confusion, leading us astray. Some sciences claim dreams are a way to process our emotions and problems in our lives. While religion tells us dreams are a way for God to speak to us.

In this girl's mind, who lived with this dream repeating itself throughout her life as she swallowed down the sorrowful tears, it was a warning preparing her.

She realized as she looked up at her father smiling down at her—it was foresight of something coming true. As she prayed it was just

her brain processing her emotions and her inner turmoil and that none of it was true, it was indeed God speaking to her.

Her dream did come true.

Her father had almost reached his fifty-ninth birthday and from that moment the aching, the grasping, the dream all stopped.

Alexia had feared death, but God was showing her that even in death we still live through Him. After everything was said and done, after trying to still this secret in her little heart, after trying to be brave for him and for herself, after the burden of feeling as if she had already lost him even though he was still alive, she reflected and realized what power there is in a dream.

Mish (Eileen) Murphy



IN DREAMS WE FIND FORGIVENESS

I dream, Auntie,
you're knitting a black potholder,
as you perch

on your dead mother's porch steps,
clamping your knees together,

& you tell me it's *all yours*:

Grandma's silver fish knives,

a hundred pairs
of shoes that don't fit you.

Before she died, you grabbed her house—
hell, you grabbed Grandma—

& now you sip
from her iced tea glass,
sleep in her bed,
use hand towels
with *her initials* on them.

But maybe I'm wrong.

Can't we forgive each other?

Older now,
you're Grandma's twin—

I also dream
I rush to Grandma's
& usher you out to dinner,
picking up the tab.

Because I'm sorry
you're
dying,
too.

Liliet Gonzalez Perera



THE WALL OF DREAMS

Dreams are an impenetrable wall that does not tremble. It grows with our daily existence, a wall that we speak of and believe in. Hidden in a remote place, it is only reachable with a key.

It is watched over by two guards day and night, every hour, every minute, and every second. These guards, named Faith and Hope, watch over this wall, in sync with the ticking hands of a clock. Tick-tock, tick-tock—they remain standing, not moving an inch. Both wear armor and wield spears to keep enemies at bay. They constantly repeat an oath that has been ingrained in their body, mind, and soul:

We march into the darkness no matter the time, as we have to protect the wall.

The oath binds them to the wall inescapably.

Why? Why do Faith and Hope guard this wall with such might? What makes this wall so important? What is this wall?

This wall is Dreams.

It is constructed from countless bricks that add to its foundation allowing it to withstand anything that comes its way. These bricks are made from goals, accomplishments, success, hard work, and happiness. Each brick carries stories, experiences, and lessons— together, they form the Wall of Dreams.

Such an eminent wall should be counted among the Seven Wonders of the World. It is an immaculate creation that seems to have been crafted by God himself as a testament to his Word and plan for us. This wall is so old that it dates to the first humans of this world, and it is the reason that pushed humans to evolution.

Dreams are a wall that allow our hearts to beat and our minds to think. Every moment we live is safeguarded by this wall. It drives us to do imaginable and unstoppable things. It keeps our dreams

untouched from adversity, adversity that seeks any moment to take our dreams for itself and leaves us as an empty shell without purpose. When that happens, it means we have succumbed to fears, failure, and sadness. Yet, this wall rebuilds itself; it never falls, even if it loses multiple bricks. Faith and Hope are there to patch it up and fill the gaps left by adversity. The gaps can be as small as a single grain of rice or as vast as a whale swimming the ocean.

Dreams are a testimony to the wall's existence, but only success has the key to unlock it. The moment we achieve success is when our dreams become a tangible reality. Without success, the wall will crumble, leaving nothing but a soulless body. This success is what keeps us grounded and centered. It maintains an athlete's focus on their sport, enabling them to give their all. It keeps a teacher's patience when dealing with students. It encourages the chef to cook and prepare exquisite delicacies.

It sustains, it nourishes; it keeps all of us dreaming and expanding endlessly.

In the end, the Wall of Dreams is always going to be there, expanding to its fullest. The more dreams we have, the more bricks fill in the wall. The wall's main purpose is to be so tall and wide that it takes miles and miles to reach its far end. The wall holds the most powerful truth in the world: success is the force that transforms our dreams into reality. Through success, the wall transcends time and space, becoming everlasting. It carries a legacy across the universe, evolving into one immutable truth:

A realized dream.



Suzanne S. Austin-Hill



NEVER A WALLFLOWER

Aaron Loguercio



THE FEELING THAT WILL ALWAYS FOLLOW

I slam my hand on the table, enjoying the feeling. Operating off two hours of ‘I Can’t Believe It’s Not Sleep’, I keep myself awake through adrenaline sometimes, since it’s stronger than coffee. I berate myself: “Stay awake!” I need to keep myself from falling asleep. I look at the table and see some blood on it “Damn it.” I go to the bathroom for cleaner and a washcloth. I hate getting blood on the family table my parents gave me after I moved out of their place.

In the bathroom I wash my hands and watch the bright red inky blood disperse in the flow of cold water, spiraling down the drain, “Just like my life,” I muse to myself. I look in the mirror at the disheveled man that seems ten drinks in without a drop of alcohol—messy hair, untucked white button-down shirt.

I work many hours, far too many hours. I am tired, but I know I can’t go to sleep. Accounting has me struggling to stay awake though, all those numbers and making people’s charges magically smaller, so much to keep track of... Oh no, I’m falling asleep now, I don’t want to go back, to see that place again.

I find myself wandering in a desert, a desert with a ceiling for a sky, pitch black with no stars. How strange not to see the sky or the stars in a vast open area of sand that is lit up as if it were midday. I take steps across the white sand, trying to find a way out. Then I remember this place. Panicked, I look around. I see the city off in the distance like it always has been, but so far, I don’t feel “it” nearby. Once I get to the city, I try to find some way to solve the meaning behind this place.

Up close, the city is all dark green colors with blackened gradients, walls that seem drawn with a slick ink stretching up and down the buildings. As I approach, I feel watched. Statues of shadow

make up this city's denizens. They watch me from high places and dark alleyways. They seem harmless enough despite their glares sinking into me.

As I get further into the city, white sand blown around by false wind becomes scarce and the layout of the city becomes more complex. A concrete jungle ensnares me and right then and there, I feel it.

I can tell, maybe because it is a dream, that I am being chased by something, although, I can't see it. Of the five senses, this monster only exists in one, the sense of touch. It is no monster I can see, no beast with a roar, no smelly creature that chases me. It is as if I am being chased by the concept of feeling itself. Its footsteps are like thuds, it looks like vibrations, sounds like cold, smells like hunger, tastes like pins and needles. How can I run from something like that?!

I move quickly, running as fast as I can, but I can feel it catching up, an approach warned by goosebumps crawling from my back to my chest. I run until the city darkens to a corridor. I see skulls on the walls, row after row of them. I feel surrounded by them until eventually goosebumps that are all over me are also inside me. I'm suffocating. I cough and cough in an attempt to breathe until I cough up red. I look up and see the family table before collapsing completely, my vision going dark.

I awake in a hospital to the sound of buzzing lights, not knowing how I arrived here. I see my brother sitting next to the hospital bed. "Hey brother, wake up," I urge him. I haven't seen him in a while"

He wakes and sees me; a grin lifts on his face. "Hey, how are ya? Mom and Dad called me after they couldn't get a hold of you, told me to go over to your place. I found you knocked out on the floor."

My mood had brightened upon seeing my brother's calm smile, but had changed to seriousness upon learning how I got here. "Oh, I see. That's strange."

My brother's face contorts with concern. "So, you passed out, and the doctor said you've been out for almost a day, told me it might be stress."

"You could say that..." I reply vaguely.

"Say, what happened to the family table Mom gave ya?"

My eyes widen at my brother's innocent question. I feel it right then and there; it wasn't just a dream.

Carol Ann Moon



TO DREAM OR NOT TO DREAM

My father just tugged at my mother's fleece robe
Like a kid too short to be seen will do.
In my father's case
He is a ghost,
Reaching back from the next life
To my mother stuck in her old life without him.
She stands at his sock drawer,
Staring at the softly rolled men's
Diabetic white sport socks --
Finally ready maybe to donate
To Family Champions' Thrift?
She opens a second maple wood drawer and
Her champion's tuxedo bow tie and cuff links recline against one
another,
Long idle, since the natty men's black dress socks were packed
away,
And my father's wedding band didn't play
At the Wayne Manor
On weekends anymore.
Still, my dad has his court-jester-joking-nature,
Even in death,
And he wants to make her laugh when she needs to cry,
Tugging at her heart by this impish phantom touch,
Silently asking his time immemorial question:
"Pat, do you have any clean socks for me?"

Brielle Terry



BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH

Since her husband's death, Nia has seen him in her dreams. Not in a way you would typically expect, where she would replay all the happy memories they had together or reminisce about the things that could've been if he were still alive. She could actually interact with him every time she fell asleep.

On the first night it occurred, Nia thought it was some sort of joke God was playing on her. She couldn't believe that she could see him. The clothes that he had worn yesterday: his favorite black button down, a pair of grey pants that Nia bought him for Father's Day, black dress sneakers that were worn out, and his locs pulled up in a low ponytail.

"I can't believe this is happening right now," Nia said, starting to feel agitated that she was confronting his death all over again, just 24 hours after his fatal car crash. She massaged her head and tight curls, trying to calm herself down.

But her agitation was cut short when her husband rushed into her arms and cried. Nia tried to peel him off, still thinking that it was some sort of sick dream. However, she quickly realized something: she could feel him—the grip he had on her arms, the tears soaking into her shirt, and his weight as her hands pushed him off of her. She couldn't believe it.

"Damien, I can feel you . . .and you can feel me. Oh my God . . ."

In this very moment, they both knew their lives would change into something neither of them ever suspected.

A couple of months later, Nia began to scour the Internet to see if anything would help their situation. Nothing came to be until she came across an article about deceased people who get stuck between Heaven and Earth. The article went into detail about how many

people saw their deceased loved ones in objects, other people, and most rarely, dreams. The article never talked about how to help the deceased get to the other side. That was okay, because Nia wasn't ready to let go of their dream.

Three years passed and the dreams happened every single night. In this dream space, they could imagine any place they wanted to be and that would be the setting. And every single time they chose Paris, the favorite place they visited together.

Damien sat on the ground looking at the Eiffel Tower, his hands messing with the grass underneath him. Nia sat next to him, taking in a deep breath as a breeze blew by.

"I don't care if we think of this place every time, it's still so beautiful." She smiled wide, resting her hand on top of Damien's.

"Yeah..." Damien slowly pulled his hand away as he gave Nia a worried look. Her face instantly fell.

"What is it?"

"I think..." He paused, not knowing how Nia would take it. He was avoiding eye contact so as not to make it harder on himself. "I think it's time for me to go. Or at least figure out a way to get out of this limbo." He pulled back his lips, already regretting what he said.

Nia went silent. Damien could tell she was thinking a million things at once, since she sat still for a while. Finally, she brought her thoughts together and said, "What changed?"

Damien clasped his hands together. "I don't think you should be living like this because of me. There's probably a lot of great guys who would want to ta--"

"I don't need other guys. I need you."

"But Nia..."

"Don't 'but Nia' me! Where the hell is this coming from?" She started to tear up. Damien immediately started wiping her tears. He finally looked her in the eyes, sighing hard.

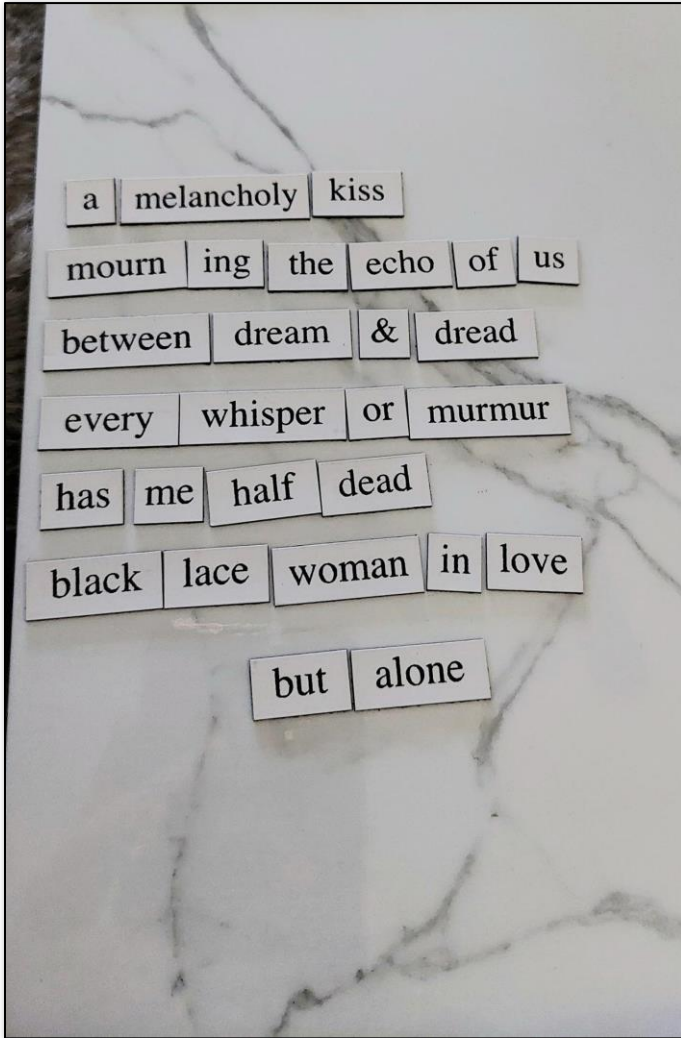
"Okay, I just think that you shouldn't be held back by me anymore. Nia, babe, I'm not alive anymore, that's the reality of it all.

I can't be the reason why you won't continue your life in the real world. You know I will always love you, you know that. But we can't do this forever."

Nia punched him in his arm, tears still streaming down her face. She knew he was right, but she wasn't ready to accept that reality. Life without him was already hard and now she had to say goodbye forever. She started to cry even harder.

"It's going to be so hard. I can't even imagine it, but I'll figure out a way. That's my promise to you." She started to smile just a bit. "I love you. I'll always love you."

"And I'll always love you."



Tiffany Anderson



MELANCHOLY DREAM

Janet Watson



DREAM BARS

Remembering the taste of the last bar I ate,
I beat butter-egg-sugar-vanilla into fluff,
add enough flounces of flour to create a cookie-base,
press this into a nine-by-thirteen-inch baking pan,
and place it in the heat of the oven
where it becomes a fragrant gold foundation
for the rest of the recipe.

Remembering the taste of the last bar I ate,
I now sprinkle this fabled confection-to-be
(surely you've heard of it) with chopped pecans
and heaping handfuls of shredded coconut,
then pour Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
over everything I've assembled,
and pause to lick trickles of creamy yum-yum
sliding down the side of the can.

Remembering the taste of the last bar I ate,
I spread semi-sweet morsels of dark chocolate
(except for a dozen-or-so, set aside to munch),
atop this wholly angelic concoction,
that sings to me of holidays back home.
I return it to the oven and wait
for the ultimate Hallelujah Chorus.

Remembering the taste of the last bar I ate,
I sniff the kitchen air while the treasure cools,
until I'm able to draw a knife through the layers,
three times lengthwise, and wipe the blade
to make the final clean, crosswise cuts
that produce twenty-four chewy, gooey bars.
My anticipation has not dulled one bit,
for as I pick one up, I'm remembering
the taste of the last dream bar I ate.

Jamal Fuller



AFRICAN HAIR

Kinky, coily, or wavy
Showing diversity among us

A symbol of strength and a dream of unit
Threads of heritage woven together
A soft blanket protecting us from the sun

Each barber's cut unique
From afros to dreads, high tops to waves

A people risen from chains of oppression
Flowing freely in the wind, each strand chanting freedom

Coils connecting us to our ancestors
Each hair carrying DNA of a vibrant past

Let us rejoice and sing—
it will always hold its strength
African hair is not gone

Diane Neff



I DREAM OF DRAGONS

Do dragons snore amid their dreams?
I've wondered how they rest.
Their comforters all singed and burnt,
or naked, tail to chest.

The midnight rumbles we might hear
could be from many beasts,
but I believe that dragons belch
with fire, after feasts.

Do dragons cook their food ahead
or wait for breath to cook it?
Do they all visit dining rooms
or grab and go, just book it?

In any case, I've never seen
a dragon eating dinner,
but in my dreams they like their steak
cut thick, served rare, a winner.

Tonight I hope to dream again
of dragons and their history—
through fables and from picture books
I still believe their mystery.

Diane Neff



DRAGONS' BREATH

The dragons come with fiery breath, my sleep
disturbed by scenes of feudal wars, a knight
who slays his foes, his regent's lands to keep.
In modern times we find that beasts will fight

with bombs and bullets, claiming sovereign rule—
their politics our nightmares, nations rent,
defiant mobs, with methods dark and cruel,
and laws ignored, their countries in descent.

We reach for hope, a light – perhaps a dream
may lead to consonance, a shared belief
in peace, in harmony of life, a gleam
of distant star that promises relief.

Perhaps there's more to which our dreams aspire,
but dragons breathe—the world is still on fire.

Cheryl A. Van Beek



BREATH OF ANGELS

Like the breath of angels,
night mist glows beneath muffled,
ancient star glint that whispers
over the bridge of Now and Then.

Silver vapor swirls, veils and unveils,
halos the pond, sprays fragrance
of white ginger flowers, beads the rose,
christens prayer plants' leafy scrolls.

It spirits into earth, hides
in dreams, mingles with air, leaves
its diamond earrings for dawn to wear.

Morning song breaks over the pond.
Ferried by mist-cooled air
bird choir is sharper. It reaches us
from far away, long ago, seeps into us.



Renee Gould



DRIFTIN'

Jessica Swanson



GOOD MORNING. GOOD NIGHT.

The sun returns my love in freckles and burns,
in heat and sweat and a permanent flush across my cheeks.
And I daydream of things I cannot have, like your weight upon me.
The laughter of crows echoes across dried lakes and scorched grass.
The breeze carries the sweetness of withering magnolias and I—

I think of you in stillness, beneath a moon I cannot see,
in cool and comfortable darkness when I'm meant to be asleep.
And if I listen closely to the quiet, well.

The night returns your love in intrusive thoughts
and lavender dreams, strange shapes upon the walls.
Sometimes, I feel a soft finger down my spine or the brush of hair from my face.
The fan must be running a little too high and I—

Elliot Greenbaum



TRIPTYCH—SLEEP TO DREAM

[Written while listening to Samuel Barber's "Adagio
for Strings," Richard Stoltzman and the Kalman
Opperman Clarinet Choir.]

1.

darling
sleep to dream
dream moon glowing
dream moonbeams

darling
sleep to dream
dream moonbeam
lighting a path across still lake

dream moonbeam
falling on your
soft hand
holding mine

o darling
dream moonlight
on your lips
kissing mine

dream darling
dream
our embrace
o darling

dream our embrace
dream my lips
softly on your smile
dream our laugh

darling dream
dream love
our love
that is not a dream

2.

moonlight
on still dark lake
moonbeam a path
to soft shoreline

finding you
a path to you
a path to you
to my

o darling
not a dream
not a poem
rather a gentle smile

a glowing moonlit
smile
a casual
smile

for i am
with you
all is our kiss
all is moonlight

all is our embrace
all is our love
all is moonlight
all is our love

3.

moonlit lake
mountains on far side
cold dark far away
snow-capped mountains
moonbeam
crosses still lake
a path
to our embrace

why do you smile
why do you laugh
why do your dark eyes
glow in moonlight

why is your kiss
so easy
why is your kiss
a dream

o darling
moonlight
moonbeams
a lake
an embrace

a soft kiss
darling sleep
to
dream

Heaven Nazario



WHAT WE COULD HAVE BEEN

We could have been something special
We could have been written in the stars
Instead, I write poems you won't read
And fantasize about you loving me

When I saw you last, I couldn't bear
To look into your lovely azure eyes
For fear you would see my true feelings
Reflected right back at you

I try not to think of you, keep
My daydreams at bay, but that's the thing
You are frozen in my haunted mind
Stubbornly stuck like a splinter

Even though you'll never know,
I hope one day you'll see, the girl
Who laughs at all your jokes



Patricia Campion



DREAM HORIZON

Michael Christopher



CEASELESS DREAMING

Before I was young
Being older was what I wanted.
Bedtime never worked, yet I dreamed.

I wandered between dreamlands
That ran through my head.
I dreamed of powers unattainable,
And future jobs that never were.

I thought I'd follow in my mother's footsteps...
But I never did.

When I was young
I wished for more and more.
Tighter schedule, but I dreamed.

I played visions in class
Over and over again.
A new passion had been found,
Had shifted to my hands

I thought I'd follow Ms. Grucza's footsteps...
But I never did

Before I was old
Being younger was what I wanted.
I couldn't sleep, still I dreamed.

Newfound worries pop up like weeds,
Commitment: something I want, but can't grasp.
Life started moving fast and yet,
I had a new dream for me.

I thought I'd follow the random zookeeper's footsteps...
But I never did.

When I got old
I thought I'd reached my goal,
But I couldn't stop dreaming.

I dreamed of doing everything always.
I dreamed of things that never were.
I dreamed of what I wanted to be.
But the dreams changed too fast.

I hope I follow Bryan Lee O'Malley's footsteps,
Or no more dreams for me.

 Bryan Lee O'Malley is a Canadian cartoonist.

Gyllian Ervin



**A PANTOUM ON WANTING
TO BE REMEMBERED**

I wanted to be a surgeon when I grew up.
I wanted to know I was making a difference.
I saw change enacted around me,
I wanted to be a part of something great.

I wanted to know I was making a difference.
There were lots of things I used to want.
I wanted to be a part of something great.
I used to surround myself with hope.

There were lots of things I used to want.
I wanted to be more than just myself.
I used to surround myself with hope
When I thought I could make a difference.

I wanted to be more than just myself.
I wanted to not be forgotten.
When I thought I could make a difference,
The world seemed a whole lot brighter.

I wanted to not be forgotten.
I saw change enacted around me.
The world seemed a whole lot brighter.
I wanted to be a surgeon when I grew up.

Sebastian Lopez



A FUTURE'S DREAM

The sun dips low, a crimson sphere,
Casting shadows long and near.
A traveler's path, once winding wide,
Now nears its end, where dreams abide.
The weary feet, that once did roam,
Now find their rest, a welcome home.
The heart, once restless, wild and free,
Seeks solace now, eternally.
The journey's end, a bittersweet sight,
A chapter closed in fading light.
Yet hope remains, a flicker's gleam,
In dreams reborn, a future's dream.

Makayla Bech



A LETTER TO SYLVIA PLATH

To the woman who inspires me, scares me, haunts me, and guides me,

I write to you because I have questions, and I believe that I am more alike to you than I am to any human that walks this forsaken planet. Is that why you left so early? Only thirty years you could bear it. I'm twenty-one years into this life, and I'm frightened that to have my dreams succeed, I'll have to reach an untimely demise like you did. I don't want to die, but isn't tragedy what makes a poet a true artist? Wasn't it you who wrote this?

“I can never read all the books I want; I can never be all the people I want and live all the lives I want. I can never train myself in all the skills I want. And why do I want? I want to live and feel all the shades, tones, and variations of mental and physical experience possible in my life. And I am horribly limited.”

You wrote in such crucial detail of the things that you desired, but why then did you leave so early? Is your death a metaphor that represents that all cannot be seen on this earth and to experience all the experiences I must die? It infuriates me that these thoughts run loosely in my mind and tangle within each other creating spiderwebs of confusion, despair. I've read your diaries; I have memorized your late-night thoughts. I have learned to write mine down as well, and I wonder if I do this because I strive to have the talent that you did, to build the success that you succeeded in. But why then are you buried in West Yorkshire? Was it because you only found success in *Colossus* while you were alive? Did you think that you could only win a Pulitzer Prize posthumously? But you wrote of wanting to live. Wanting to experience, to see, to feel, to know, to love. Why must

you make me question if my dreams of hearing my words read, seeing them printed in a book, hearing chatter of my plotlines on busy streets, if tracing the title of my novel on a glossy cover is only possible if my body lies in a grave?

Did you gain inspiration from Emily Dickinson, who lived in solitude and never had much life experience, who nearly died when she found that her muse for love poems was moving away? Did you relate to her crazed remarks of funeral processions in her mind? Did she remind you, of you? Maybe then you'd understand why I am so angry that to succeed as a writer, to do the one thing that my entire soul desires, I must gain creative light from female poets who lived short lives. But unlike you, I want to live while my stories come to life, while readers respond to the pictures I curated with a pencil and paper in moonlight.

I write to you in solidarity, and I tip my dirty baseball cap to you. The one that hides the hair I tangled while thinking of you in frustration, in confusion, of love. Thank you for writing in your diary, for elegantly looping your letters together to form phrases that changed my life and perspective forever. For igniting my literature-loving heart, for letting me know it's acceptable to be sad, to let others read my madness. Thank you for igniting my dream. It is because of you that my dream is to be as successful as you. But when I succeed, I will not be trapped in an underground grave, I will be more alive and freer than ever.

Yours truly,

Makayla Bech, future poet and forever dreamer

Heaven Nazario



DREAMING OF ALLITERATION

the wind whips wildly
dreams don't dally in my head
they fly fast and far
like shooting stars strike heaven
breaking in a billion bits



Elaine Person



HOLIDAY DREAM



Our Community



CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Tiffany Anderson is a wife and a mother, first and foremost. Thank you to my amazing husband and son for your endless support. Tiffany is an Amazon best-selling author, a passionate *Sandhill Review* poet, and a proud Saint Leo University alum and staff member. She currently serves as the Manager of Community Engagement at the University.

Suzanne S. Austin-Hill is a female, BIPOC, senior photographer living in Ruskin, a suburb of Tampa, Florida. Her work received recognition at shows at the Florida Museum of Photographic Arts and the Tampa Museum of Art. A photograph, Cemetery—St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Haymarket, VA) appeared on the cover of *A Corner Plot With A View: 5 Stories of Lives Past* by Mark T. Sondrini. Suzanne's photographs have accompanied poems published in *The News of Kings Point*, *The News of Sun City Center*, and *Of Poets & Poetry* (the magazine sponsored by the Florida State Poets Association), and have appeared in *Sandhill Review* and *CADENCE*. For Suzanne, photography is a readily available form of expression.

Adrianna Astudillo is a senior at Saint Leo University pursuing a degree in English with a specialization in Creative Writing and a minor in Legal Studies. A Panama City, Florida, resident, Adrianna has a deep love for writing poetry. She often delves into the details of the scenery around her and transfers it to the paper before her.

Makayla Bech is a student at Saint Leo University studying English with a focus in creative writing. She has received a publication in *Sandhill Review* previously with her poem "Ode to my Diary." After graduation, Makayla plans to further her education in creative writing.

D. H. Buxton is currently an adjunct instructor of Academic Writing at Saint Leo University. Mr. Buxton is a graduate of Saint Leo University's Master's in Creative Writing program and also possesses a Master's degree in Military History from American Military University, Class of 2014. Mr. Buxton's interests in writing span mystery, suspense, horror, and military nonfiction.

Gregory Byrd is a Fulbright fellow (Albania, 2011) and Pushcart nominee. His prose has appeared widely, recently in *Louisville Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Willow Springs*, and *Baltimore Review*. Greg's poetry chapbook, *The Name of the God Who Speaks*, won the Robert Phillips Prize from Texas Review Press. Greg graduated from the writing workshops at Eckerd College and Florida State University and teaches writing and literature at St. Petersburg College in Tarpon Springs, Florida (www.gregorybyrd.org).

Kayla Caicedo: Kayla Caicedo is a Clinical Psychology major based in Saint Leo University. They write about themes like self-acceptance, mental health, and nature. When not writing, they enjoy going to the beach, being with family and friends, and reading!

Patricia Campion (PhD) is a graduate of the Saint Leo MA in Creative Writing (2019) and former SLU professor. She has participated in a few Sandhill Writers Retreats and is a member of the San Antonio (Florida) Writers Group. Her poetry, photography and nonfiction have appeared previously in the *Sandhill Review* and a few other publications. She currently resides in Ireland.

Alex Carmichael is a student at Saint Leo University who also takes professional photos.

Michael Christopher is a Creative Writing Major based in Saint Leo University. They write about mental struggles and comedic happenings in life and are currently working on a graphic novel. When not writing they enjoy hitting the town with the boys.

Janna Correa is a two-time graduate and current-time adjunct English instructor at Saint Leo University. After obtaining her B.A. in Advanced Literary Studies and then her Masters in Creative Writing, she returned to her alma mater this year to teach—only her most recent endeavor in surrounding herself with words, writing, and storytelling. When she isn't teaching, she loves playing her piano and guitar, drawing, and practicing her writing craft to keep her skills—and her pencils—sharp.

Valerie Crosswell began writing poetry some 30 years ago when she lived in Central Texas. She studied at Texas State University's MFA program outside Austin and later, after moving to San Antonio, at the Gemini Ink literary center, which attracted many well-known poets as teachers. Her poems have appeared in the *Texas Observer*, *Passager*, the *Bloomsbury Review*, *Artisan*, *Poetry on the Move*, several anthologies, and other literary publications. She returned to St. Petersburg, where she had grown up, in 2015. She was an attendee of the Sandhill Writer's Retreat.

Harmony Curry is a freshman at Saint Leo University who majors in Clinical Psychology. She's involved in her community on campus as the manager of the women's basketball team and a member of Saint Leo's Pom Squad. She aspires to not only be a psychologist but an author as well.

Alyssa Nicole Dufort is a sophomore at Saint Leo University. She is currently studying developmental psychology and minoring in creative writing and biology. When not writing, she enjoys spending time with her pets at her family farm.

Valerie "Ray" Eulett is a junior at Saint Leo studying for her English degree. She's been published in two previous editions of the *Sandhill Review* and aspires to be an editor upon graduation.

Gyllian Ervin is a student at Saint Leo University pursuing a degree in Clinical/Counseling Psychology, with a minor in Creative

Writing. Their work has appeared in the previous edition of *Sandhill Review* with the poem “The Inevitably of Change.” She tends to write about all kinds of topics, but sticks to themes of intimate relationships or strong messages. When not writing she enjoys archery and loving on her cats, Karma and Loki!

Jamal Fuller is currently a sophomore studying Criminal Justice at Saint Leo University, is from Tampa, Florida, loves writing, and wants to continue improving as a writer.

Randy Goggin lives on the Gulf Coast of central Florida, where he works as a park ranger on an 8,700-acre nature preserve. His prose has appeared in the *Dillydown Review*, *South Florida Poetry Journal*, *Sandhill Review*, and *Islandia*, and he will have an essay in the next issue of the *Apalachee Review*. His favorite animals include the cephalopods, corvids, and cetaceans.

Liliet Gonzalez-Perez is a junior at Saint Leo University majoring in computer science. She is in the Honors Program. She is planning on continuing with a master’s degree. She has been involved in campus organizations and clubs, such as the Student Government Union, Upsilon Pi Epsilon Honor Society, and Pentest Club. When she was eleven years old, she moved from Cuba to the United States. She has been living in Tampa, Florida, since her move. She strives to do her best in anything she puts her heart into, and hard work is important to her. One of Liliet’s goals is to provide for her family and make her parents proud of her success.

Renee Gould is a Collection Development Librarian at the Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library. Renee has always had an interest in photography and could always be counted on to have a camera on hand to capture life’s most precious moments, even before phones had cameras. The artist’s passion lies in photographing animals and nature.

Peter Gordon is an award-winning poet who has had over 170 poems published in various journals. He’s authored three collections:

Middle Age Spread, Let's Play Two, and Two Car Garage. Peter is a founding member and former President of Orlando Area Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association. He lives in Orlando and teaches in Full Sail University's Film Production MFA program.

Elliot Greenbaum is a retired business owner based in Tampa, Florida. He writes about everyday observations and is working on a new collection of love poems. When not writing, he enjoys reading novels, hiking, and feeding the ducks. Elliot is an alum of SLU writers' workshops and writing program. He has studied poetry with D. M. Thomas, an English poet and author, and Gianna Russo, among others. He led the Tampa Writers Alliance Poetry Group for many years.

Lola Haskins has published 14 books of poetry and three of nonfiction. A new poetry collection, *Like Zeros, Like Pearls* (about insects) is forthcoming in Spring 2025. Her most recent effort, *Homelight* (Charlotte Lit Press 2023), was named Poetry Book of the Year by *Southern Literary Review*. The one before that, *Asylum: Improvisations on John Clare* (University of Pittsburgh, 2019), was featured in the *NYT Magazine* and in *The John Clare Journal*. Her honors include the Iowa Poetry Prize, two Florida Book Awards, two NEAs, four Florida Individual Artist Grants, narrative poetry prizes from *Southern Poetry Review* and *New England Review*, a Florida's Eden prize for environmental writing environmental writing, and the Emily Dickinson prize from Poetry Society of America. She has served as Chancellor for the Florida State Poets Association since 2016. She has taught poetry workshops and read at SLU.

Jeff Karon is a consultant who provides reputation and brand management for organizations and individuals through writing and editing, web and instructional design, and training. He has over twenty-five years' experience training thousands of students in classes and workshops, both as a former university professor (in English and writing) as well as consultant. As an editor and writer, he has worked

on projects from around the world and has presented at the local, state, national, and international levels. His work has appeared in publications such as *Apalachee Review*, *The Hillsborough River: Human Connections*, *Glass Bottom Sky: 10 Years of YellowJacket Press*, *White Pelican Review*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Maevae Kiley is a graduating senior English major at Saint Leo University. She specializes in short stories, historical fiction, fantasy, and poetry. She works at The Lions' Pride Media Group as a writing intern as well as an internship with the Saint Leo University Art Program.

Emily Kochanski is a Saint Leo alum and current University employee in the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. Born and raised in the Sunshine State, she recently made the move to the colder climate of Columbia, Maryland. A lifelong patron of the arts, when she isn't shining center stage in the latest community theater production, she can be found curled up with a good book or writing her latest poem or short story.

Aaron Loguercio is a current student at Saint Leo University. He writes about themes of fiction, dreams, action, adventure, thriller, mystery, and many more and is currently creating a story for a television series. When he's not writing, he enjoys playing video games, hanging out with friends, watching movies and TV shows, going to the beach, and listening to music.

Sebastian Lopez is an English major in Creative Writing based at Saint Leo University. Their work has not yet appeared in publications, but they write about cultural identity, generational trauma, resilience, and personal transformation. They are currently working on a personal essay that explores their birth, experiences with sleep paralysis, and vivid dreams. When not writing, they enjoy tabletop RPGs and creating custom Magic: The Gathering cards.

Carol Ann Moon is a full professor in the Daniel A. Cannon Memorial Library. She has been a proud faculty member at Saint Leo University since August 2001. In December 2017 she received her MFA in Poetry from Stetson University in DeLand, Florida. She likes to travel and to watch Sicilian detective shows.

Mish (Eileen) Murphy is Assistant Poetry Editor for *Cultural Daily*. She teaches English at Polk State College, Florida. A Pushcart nominee, she has published three poetry works: *Fortune Written on Wet Grass* (2019), *Sex & Ketchup* (2021), and *Evil Me* (2020). Mish graduated from New College, Sarasota, and Columbia College, Chicago. She is a Sandhill Writers Retreat participant.

Joel Murray attended Saint Leo in its “College” days from 1991–1995, learning more than he could ever recount from some truly unforgettable professors. Along with teaching high school English and theatre for 25+ years, he taught writing as an adjunct professor for Saint Leo from 1997–2021. He now works in the Artificial Intelligence field, and is returning to his upstate New York roots after 35+ years of never quite getting much of a tan in the Sunshine State.

Heaven Nazario is currently an English major at Saint Leo University. She has always had a deep love for writing and being able to express herself through beautiful language. She has published works before with Mary Baldwin University’s literary magazine *Outrageous Fortune*. She hopes to continue her writing journey to become a novelist one day.

Diane Neff is a former professor, college dean, and US Navy officer, and now serves as an adult program librarian in the Seminole County (Florida) Public Library System. Her poetry has appeared in anthologies including *Encore; Cadence; Revelry; We Were Not Alone; Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors; Florilegium*, and *Sandhill Review*, as well as online and on public display for the City of Orlando, the Orange County (Florida) Administration, and for the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority at the Orlando International Airport. A former

president of the Orlando Area Poets, she now serves as the secretary for Florida State Poets Association. She is an alum of the Sandhill Writers Retreat.

Elaine Person is a writer, instructor, editor, speaker, performer, and photographer. She has been published in *A Century of College Humor* (Random House), *Sandhill Review*, Florida Writers Association collections, *Cadence*, *Encore*, Haikuniverse.com, and many other publications. This award-winning writer teaches at Crealdé School of Art, The Gallery 32789, Orlando Museum of Art, and Maitland Public Library. She writes “Person”alized poems and stories for all occasions. Elaine won the *Saturday Evening Post* Limerick Contest.

Mary Gail Russ, an accidental poet, is an adjunct professor at Tampa Center. She has traveled all over the world and in the United States and found poetry by accident. She has not only taught for Saint Leo, but at Villa Madonna Catholic School and for the Tampa Museum of Art. She has been submitting to the *Sandhill Review* since 2018.

Gianna Russo (Editor-in-Chief) is Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing at Saint Leo University and the inaugural Wordsmith of The City of Tampa (2020-22), appointed by Mayor Jane Castor. She is the author of the poetry collections, *All I See is Your Glinting: 90 Days in the Pandemic*, with photographer Jenny Carey (Madville Publishing, 2022); *One House Down* (Madville Publishing, 2019), and *Moonflower*, winner of a Florida Book Award. She has published poems in *Green Mountains Review*, *Gulf Stream*, *The Sun*, *Poet Lore*, *Florida Review*, *Karamu*, and *Calyx*, among others.

Dale Smrekar is a Creative Writing graduate student at Saint Leo University.

Shelbee Stephens is a freshman and a Clinical Psychology major who is extremely passionate about flash fiction and world building: “I

have the most wonderful support system back at home, and without their constant guidance I would not be at Saint Leo University.”

Jessica Swanson is a graduate student in Saint Leo's Creative Writing program. Her work has appeared in *Magazine1*, *Voidspace Zine*, and others. She writes in a variety of genres, but prefers poetry. When not writing, she enjoys a nice cup of tea and playing with her dog, Lily.

Brielle Terry is currently a junior at Saint Leo University. She is studying English with a specialization of Creative Writing. Her work *A Terrygiving in North Carolina* appeared for Saint Leo University's *Academic Excellence Day* and the reading of the 2023–2024 *Sandhill Review*. She writes in all genres, but her favorite at the moment is nonfiction. She hopes that her works inspire others to write.

Angeliki Thomas: “This is a nonfiction piece that was based on a terrifying nightmare that I experienced in High School. I was encouraged to write this piece because I am unfamiliar with authors writing about their experiences with sleep paralysis, and I wanted to expose this to readers who have not experienced this form of nightmare before. With this piece, I wanted to capture that feeling of ‘I can’t get the picture out of my head.’ Although I do not know how our bodies produce these nightmares, I can confirm that eating oranges in the sun is one of the best pieces of advice given to me by my mother to make me feel better after a scary nightmare.”

Cheryl A. Van Beek's work has appeared previously in *Sandhill Review*, *Odet*, *Poeming Pigeon*, *River Poets Journal*, and the Burgert Brothers anthology. Her poetry has also been awarded prizes by The National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Florida State Poets, and Creative Writing Ink. She lives with her wonderful husband and their exceptional cat in Wesley Chapel. She volunteers as a Master Gardener, as well as other venues, and is deeply inspired by Florida's unique beauty. Besides the transformative power of writing, she loves learning about nature, food, fitness and art. She has been a participant in the Sandhill Writers Retreat and in a Saint Leo Writer's circle.

Amberlyn Wedge is a student at Saint Leo University. She is graduating in May 2025 with an English major and Art minor. Her work has appeared in the *Sandhill Review* once before and in Young Writers USA. She writes poetry and creative nonfiction pieces. When not writing, she enjoys any form of art, listening to music, or relaxing at home with her fiancé.

Janet Watson is Vice-President of New River Poets, a chapter of the Florida State Poets Association, and has been a frequent contributor to *Sandhill Review*. She has participated in SLU Writers' Retreat and the SLU Writers Circle, and in 2006, on behalf of her poetry chapter, she partnered with Saint Leo University in obtaining a grant from Florida State Department's Division of Cultural Affairs to present a community poetry event in Wesley Chapel. She is the author of *Eyes Open, Listening*, a book-length collection of her poetry, as well as several chapbooks.

Joana Xipolitas lives in central North Carolina with her family. She enjoys gardening, reading, and writing. She is an alumna of Saint Leo University, earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology prior to her acceptance into the Creative Writing master's program.

Suzanne S. Austin-Hill



A DREAM COME TRUE

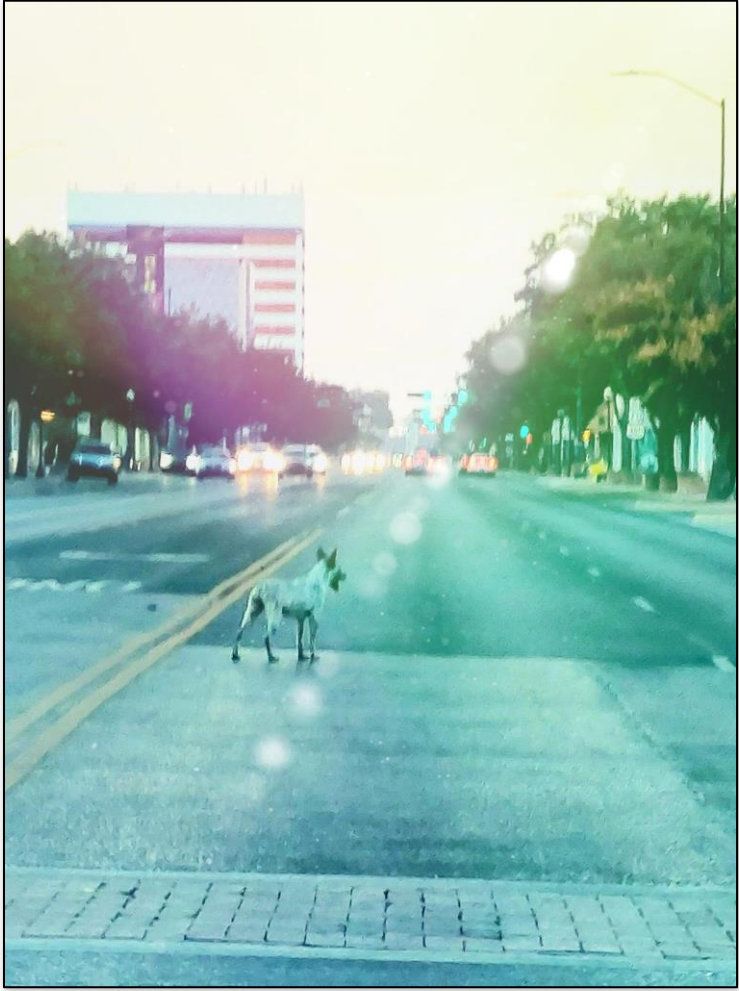
[An acrostic]

Submit my
Anytime
Nightmares or
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Longed for;

Remit my
Expectations whether
Visceral,
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Emotional or merely
Wished for.

Great
Opportunities!
All on the
Line—
Submit!

Meaningful, heart-felt
Expositions let loose because I
Took a chance.



Tiffany Anderson



CHUCHO MORNING DREAMER

