Calliope

SPECIAL ISSUE: SLEEP

Volume 10, Number 1
December 1986
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Calliope is published twice a year, in December
and May. Single issues are $2.00; a year's sub-
scription, $3.50.

Submissions of poetry and short fiction are
welcomed from August 15-October 15 for the December
issue, and from January 15-March 15 for the May
issue. Issues are thematic and the May 1987 issue
will deal with EQUALITY. Manuscripts should be
accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.
No simultaneous submissions, please.

Manuscripts are discussed with the writer's name
masked so that beginning and established writers
are read without prejudice.

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scriptions to Martha Christina, Calliope, Creative
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Mark Cox

MOON

One boy points a flashlight into his hand; pushes hard, as if the hand isn't his, as if the cupped hand is a cave and he's finally going in.

There are figures on the wall there. One idea after another rears up, all in red and orange, the crushed powders of berry and clay and blood.

So the tent is for keeping everything inside now. And if the other boy holds a candle beneath his chin, if he makes the most important face he can imagine without seeing himself, this is for you. If his eyes become small moons, this is for you.

I will stay sprawled here on the porch, watching the trees and wondering which limbs are whose, because there is no laughter now. The dark is holding its head just so and inching back from the neighborhood. Because it knows you are there.

Guys, there is a flap in all we know, but it's closed now, you can sleep. In the morning there will simply be a place where the grass must try harder to rise up, and we can say, yeah, night was here, but it's gone now and took nothing.
C X Dillhunt

WHAT IF WE BOTH CRY OUT AT THE SAME TIME?

for Andy

-thing

You fall about the body
asleep gone

too quickly before

leaving me we know
the worry what's left us.

of the house. Awake.

I listen-- Who will
for clocks clean up,
collecting night, piece

for doors together meaning only
remembering sleepers know?
locks, for windows waiting for weather of any kind—wanting a household sleep. You

You should sleep in my head—no bed to make

no worry when we sleep

cry out—sounds like a message

no worry when to wake.
Carol Dine

AT THE RIVER

There is no comfort under the trees,
nor in sleep, where, instead of sleep
I dream.
I am desolate in a clover field.
It is hard
holding up my end of your absence.
The slim grasses bend in the wind
like the legs of small beetles.
Bare branches
reach across the slope and touch.
Kate Dougherty

FLYING HOME

My son sleeps upright
though by now he's relaxed
into the contour the plane offers;
his head on his hand, his digital watch
against the window.
My girl sleeps curled around herself,
hers head on my thigh,
her hair falls away from her face
and cascades over my legs
in ways she'd love to know
but can never manage awake.
The voice calling itself "the pilot"
says we are now over Arizona.
I study my children, imagining
they are missing the state
we once lived in.
When I look for myself
I see nothing but cloud.
Mary-Lou Erpenbeck

SOMNOLENCE

1) Shipwrecked, she used to spend her days awake, searching the waters for some sign of hope, but the sand was so hot, and the sun was so bright, that her eyes always begged to be closed. Sometimes she gave in to them, letting them shut while she leaned on a tree and listened. Often she slept.

2) The night became a friend. It was easy to stare into a cool, black world, and she found companions in the moon and the stars and the planets. She would wander in circles as they spun from sundown to sun-up. At night she could stay awake.

3) One night a new star hung low over the horizon. It worked its way from left to right, and then she realized it wasn't a star at all. A ship! The running lights of a ship! She stood and waved. She screamed and jumped and threw stones into the black water. She called and called until the lights disappeared over the horizon.

4) She began sleeping at night.

5) At sunrise she scavenged some food, and then slept on the west side of her sand. At sunset she found more food and slept on the east side of her sand. If she woke inbetween, she tried hard not to think of anything. She tried hard to take a nap.
6) One sunrise she woke and thought it wasn't so bad. She had become used to the sand fleas and the heat rash; the dark moist nights and the bright dry days; the taste of raw fish and the smell of seagull dung; the wet slosh of the ocean and the constant sand in her pants. She felt lucky to be alive. She thought she could express herself—put into words or paint the glorious feeling of being alive and human. But then she fell asleep.

7) She knew she would think more about rescue if she had a child at home or a dog or something, somewhere in the world, but all she had was in that little sailboat she named Rhapsody. There were pieces of it out there, floating in the tides with pages of books she wanted to read, and a brand new compass, and a snorkel, and a damned expensive bottle of imported champagne, but it wasn't enough to inspire her—it was easier just to sleep.
HALF THIS BED

Curled in sleep
like a question mark
body wrapped around where
I should have been
with only half this bed slept in
my absence almost wakes you

I watch your face
from this corner
an insomniac's pleasure

The weird hours I keep
trying to dampen my soul
Raymond Fausel

INSOMNIAC

The clock ticks on
towards awakening
in matters of sleep
you were always precocious
and so up hours before
the script calls for it
On the set like an
actor before his cue
out of place, tired
with no lines to say
Raymond Fausel

HOLLOW HOURS

What wakes me
in these hollow hours
the thin time
between dark and dawn

I am up
as the air
turns gray with relief
and birds
shrug off darkness
as if they know better

This is a time
for monks and madness
a time
when noise travels
unhampered to your ears
and silence is a song
Julie Cooper-Fratrik

DORMANCY

for jerry

I find you in the garden at dusk
where you kneel among newly-sprouted
spinach greens.

Your fingers drop seeds
lightly into the compliant earth, nudge
them under the soil's dark crevices
where they will germinate like a memory
held in the lacunae of a mind.

You labor patiently, knowing
that there will always be green
shoots, blossoms, some fruit.

Come spring... you say. I am amazed
at your unfa1tering belief,
your readiness to trust implicitly
in every seed you plant.
John Gilgun

HOW TO FALL ASLEEP

for Susan

Say the word Katmandu one hundred and forty-seven times.
The house you purchased in Katmandu is light and breezy.
A Siamese cat sleeps on the patio under your hammock.
You are lying on your back in the hammock.
You can smell the hemp in the rope.
The tiles in the wall are blue, which rhymes with Katmandu. And you
Are totally relaxed in Katmandu.
The silk coverlet is cool
Against your cheek. Your eye has focussed lazily
On the paisley pattern. Serenity gathers
Over the mountains of Katmandu. Serenity has a face
Like the Buddha. Let your spirit be absorbed
In that face.
Some of the blossoms on the banyan tree are white,
Others are purple and a few, those closest to the trunk,
Are a color you have never seen before. That's the way things are
In Katmandu.
Seven shamans are at your gate. They tell you, "You are forever safe
In Katmandu."
John Gilgun/How to Fall Asleep

You are slipping into a dream state in Katmandu. If you walked now
over the sharp stones in the road, your feet would not be cut.
They would not bleed.
You are a milkweed seed in motion. You are floating
over Katmandu. You look down at the little men in the minarets. You hear them calling
other men.
To Prayer.
You can hear your heart beating. You can hear yourself breathing.
A blackness is gathering.
That blackness has a blessing for you. Accept it.
CRAMP

I wake with a cramp in my ankle, muscles trying to bend the bones, crush cartilage, wrench the joints out of socket. I'm up and tugging to pull tendon muscle bone back into line. I massage hard to persuade the pain to loosen its grip; and the spasms quiver, weeping as they let go.

Who designed this little prison with its subtle alarms and warnings of gravity? We know blood and breath best, and deepest, in pain: When entropy speeds through us, spiralling, worming its way into the fabric of our flesh, and we stare, dumbfounded, enthralled by this careful explosion slowed so drastically we call it life.
Malcolm Glass

DREAMING

One never knows the cost or profit of this watching, as the mind plays to the dance of iris and lens. The sleeper holds distance and drinks in the ravelling images. Under dry ferns a procession of tired soldiers slogs into moonlight, and the mind, waking, knits meaning to the soles of their shoes.
Malcom Glass

THE SPIRIT OF THE BONES

Deep at night the spirit of my mother's bones enters my body. My own skeleton sleeps while my mother settles in. I wake in felled darkness to find my foot tapping the blanket loose. I rise and swallow a handful of pills from the wrong bottle while my cold marrow flies to Madagascar in the psychic vision her skeleton gives me. I sleep again, but dream now of foster children moving like sleepwalkers in the dark hallways of a gray house by the sea. In the morning I wake with her dull headache and the queasy echoes of an antibiotic in my throat
Malcom Glass/The Spirit of the Bones

I am sick unto death. My blood shakes in my veins, unable to sing my own song.

But I wake knowing this new life has been with me always.
Marcia Hurlow

WHAT WE TAKE TO DARKNESS

In hypnotic monotone, Tim counted backwards. I tried not to envision the beige Siskiyou range behind the house, to rest in that darkness he hummed.

I float down to a cave, perhaps in France, candle yellowing the earthen outlines of hands, bison dancing.

Set it loose, he chants.

Through catacombs hung with stone black tongues, layered and pendulous, I sink from the light. Some rich grace has sung here. Even as my hands tense to rise, I may hear cello and Milton when those tongues loosen.

Relax. Be still.

Go back.
Marcia Hurlow/What We Take to Darkness

Man-made cave
above ground, the walls
curve slick, glay yellow, rust. I hover
near the ceiling, look down as the room darkens.
The brush pile is no longer branches.
The angles are bones. The stench of old blood, acid and gas. Something hushed comes clearer
and screams with me, up-raised.
Ruth Moon Kempher

A PAGE FROM BETH'S DREAM NOTEBOOK

The aether seems at first to have been rather a region of space than an element, but with Homer it became a shining substance, fire.

W.E. Knowles Middleton, A History of the Theories of Rain

Rain, I thought. Rain on the palmettos. And sea smell, salt like the northeast wind in the dawn, coming over the water, bringing in a small shower or no. Fog.

I thought "I am asleep, but waking up." That's generally the signal for falling into deeper dreaming. Something interesting is probably coming up, other than rain. It will be in the beach house again, where palmettos rustled continually under the bedroom's awning windows, and Jonah may be in bed beside me, still my husband. Lately, however, he's not there.

Ha. It is the hall of the beach house. I have walked up the steps from the bedroom. But the house is disarranged. The rooms are backwards? Mirrored? Alice again, for Heaven's sake. I must stop that. Why am I looking out the front door? No one is there.

Step, step carefully, bare feet out to the landing. Out into the thick dawn fog. I knew it had to be fog. The wooden stairs are slippery wet, fog beading in the redwood stain. But I am surprised—the bottom step is now concrete, as it never was before. My bare feet feel it prickle. This seems extremely important. The beach house steps were wooden, down to the bricked parking area for the cars. Rotten now, those stairs. It was the
big rented house at Surfside that had concrete steps. I sat on one, one Friday, drinking beer.

There were connections there, too complex for me. I used to be so mad at my mother for braiding my hair. I wanted it loose like Alice in Wonderland, my favorite heroine. But most of my adult life I wore my hair in a braid down my back—which my mother disliked, because it didn't look normally grownup—and I wore it long, and braided in this dream.

Maybe in some other life, some other dream, Jonah had fixed the rotten step. But I doubted that, as you would too, if you knew Jonah.

Deeper into this dream, I puzzled over the disappearance of the garage doors. I should be looking at garage doors, but here I was in some sort of boiler room, with vast machinery and huge intertwinnings of pipes. Dynamos, or great heaters stood where the garage should be. I wondered where I should park the old Ford now, forgetting that it had long ago gutted itself into rust. The bowels of the ship—a strange expression. And strange it had occurred to me.

Shafts. Pipes. Asbestos wrappings. Handles. A thousand valves. The walls were a strange glowing orange stucco. But I felt at home. I had been there before. It might have been the boiler room of my father's ship, the old T.J. Or was I part of the machinery?

Now I discovered what I'd been looking for all along. Directly in front of me was an old-fashioned ornate couch. I thought "couch," but immediately scratched that out and changed to the more accurate term, "love-seat."

Two men sprawled on the love-seat, apparently fallen asleep waiting for me. On my right, nodding gently, was C. And on the left—sinistral—was Jonah, of course. They were both dressed in Marine Corps
greens, fatigues, or what is it crosses my mind? Drills. This is proper for C, who was a marine in the Korean War which was our War; Jonah would not like this, as he was in the navy then.

"Manoeuvres" comes to mind. Works of man. Ha, again. I wish C would wake up and creep away to me, but I am afraid to wake him. Besides, I can see now that Jonah is awake, and has been awake all the time, watching me. His body is tense with anger. How could I have thought he was asleep?

That is a grave error I have made, too many times.

"Which one do you want?" asks Jonah.

I consider lying. But there doesn't seem to be any reason left, for obscuring the truth. "I want him," I said. I say. I keep slipping from past to present feeling. Hard to follow myself, too. "I've had you thousands of times, years and years ago."

It was not the right thing to say. Jonah, furious, climbs up on a ladder and turns a huge, heavy iron valve. The machinery that had been sitting quietly springs into violent, threatening life. Flames gush from the shafts. Motors whirr. Fans spin.

Now I'm mad. "Why didn't you let well enough alone?" I shout at him. "You've destroyed us all."

Now I'm on a bicycle, pedaling into town. Fog still, as it is still early morning. Obstinate as ever, I go the wrong way down a one-way street. I fly north up Aviles, which is a south-bound traffic lane, bouncing over the covvle-bricks, under overhanging balconies, vines and petunias in baskets swinging overhead. This is the wrong direction for coming in from home; no matter. Like Alice's White Rabbit, I know I'm late.

I have to get to the Library before it closes. Before it opens? I'm not sure. But there's some-
thing terribly urgent about being at the Library on time. I fly past alleyways, tumbling lantana yellow and white blooms at me, and wheel a sharp turn into the Library's cool, tree shadowed patio.

My bicycle falls apart. I realize the back tire has been flat for a long time. This seems basic to my life. Everything wants to disintegrate. O Herr Doktor Freud, where is your practice these days? Surely not Vienna. The seat falls off into wet grass. There is no point in trying to pick up the pieces. The sprockets. From the grass. I should never have ridden that bike: it was against the Law.

All the books in the Library are out of reach. Story of my life, I think, but I seem to be laughing, all the same. A young man leans against the Library stair-well wall. It might be Ra. He has that veiled, sensuous expression about the eyes. Scorpio with Scorpio ascendant, or so he says. He tells me it's a good thing the bike fell apart when it did. Otherwise, he'd have had to arrest me.

It was undoubtedly Ra. No one else I know would be so amused by my discomfort. A young, young man, indeed.

"You talk too much," I tell him. "Besides, you aren't the Law, to me." There's music playing, out on the street, and I want to go to Fiesta. The celebration. It must be August, I tell myself. The City has its birthday in August, and the Fiesta always used to be on Aviles Street.

The ramshackle booths, tacky red and yellow paint, with doodad banners, have moved into the street as I spoke, and strings of colored lights criss-cross overhead from the balconies. There are only a few stragglers. Too long at the fair. But there's excitement in the air.

If it's late night, Fiesta, I know where C is.
In the J.C. Garden, mixing drinks. He mixes the punch that punches, quart of vodka, quart of bourbon, his stubby hands that can be so soft around the cool bottles.

Behind me Ra whispers, "Watch out for snakes, in that Garden, Lovie...."

Indignant, moving away, I tell him. "Tell that to Eve." I'm really annoyed to find my dream so full of cliches.

"I'll tell you a poem," Eve whispers, from the bushes, smack dab out of the lantana. But I know it's she. "Is your pencil ready?"

"Stop it," I say. "You know I'm asleep."

Someone tosses a ball at a pyramid of bottles. Guitars play. A juggler now, incredible, with knives.

The J.C.'s Garden is behind an old stone wall. I can see the cement crumbling between old grey cocquina bricks. A tangle of trumpet-vine almost closes off the archway. The blossoms are brilliant orange, silk-soft, fake.

"Varmints'll git you," Ra whispers, still behind me, though unseen. Something familiar about his whisper, strange.

There are huge crepe-paper roses; fat black bugs of paper-mache. There's at least one real mosquito. And C.

Bob Talton, looking on, asks me a question for which I have no answer. I can't answer. I don't know what he asked me. He's too tall.

What matters is how happy C is, to see me. He asks me why I'm shivering, and when I say it's because I'm cold, he tells me I never need to be, now we're together. But a crowd of gypsies comes between us.

When the crowd vanishes, I ask him why he changed into his business suit. He doesn't answer, but Eve
in the bushes cackles and Ra beside her says "It's for his magic act, of course."

"Poem," Eve announces. "Listen to me." Her voice sing-songs. "When you think you've done the worst thing in the world. When you think it's the end of everything...." "That's a terrible poem." "This is a terrible dream."

But C saves it. And I feel he saved it just for me.

There is a birthday cake, with hundreds of candles, for the City, but we are the only ones there. And C behind the cake is lighting the candles. Magic, he lights them by simply rubbing his fingers together over the wicks.

For Heaven's sake! I am turning ten again, and it's my best birthday yet. He thinks it's glorious, too. We love it!

He keeps looking at me, to be sure I'm seeing it all, to be sure I approve. He lights one candle after another, covering the cake with tiny flames, but O. The best is, after all the cake's candles are lighted, he goes on, where no candles are, He makes a whole new circle of flame stars that orbit, dancing in the air.
ON THE EDGE OF IT

It is early now, not even six,  
And sleep is something that happens  
To somebody else, to people we don't know.  
The street starts to fill with traffic.  
Each car and truck strikes like a match, flaring  
Across an asphalt matchbox, burning away  
Into silence. I am watching. The arc-lamp  
Street light is orange. Twenty miles off  
In another town you lie, unsleeping, eyeing  
A digital clock. The blue numbers  
Knock the minutes off with the glazed  
Indifference of a gas meter.  
You count the worries of your life—  
The job, the kid, the rent-control board,  
The empty, other half of the bed  
I still think of as ours.  
You sit on the edge in darkness.  
If either of us were a smoker,  
Now would be the time for it. We hold  
Nothing in our fists but our fingers.  
You're switching on your light now.  
I, mine. We're switching on lights  
In two countries. From a spy-plane  
Or a hot-air balloon, someone  
Could take us both in, could fit us  
Into the same frame one more time.  
From above, the earth seems to be burning,  
Not in flames but in embers. Morning  
Birds are screaming. The land between us  
Stretches out, glowing, a bed of coals.
Nancy Lagomarsino

SLEEP HANDBOOK

Sleeping takes unusual energy. Sometimes you wake up more tired than ever, body so heavy you seem to be climbing from deep water onto a raft. A good deal of effort is required just to go to sleep, a misleading phrase since you must wait for sleep to come to you. The waiting can be made easier by pretending to be far away, so sleep stumbles across you—if sleep trips and actually starts to fall, your arms automatically will jerk out and you may even cry in terror, the terror anyone feels at being pinned down. To think of such a clumsy oaf as a lover would be ridiculous, but some people lie in the most suggestive poses, waking up hours later with a stiff neck and all their money gone.
SOMNILOQUY

I wake to an ardent declaration of love. Hopefully it's for me -- I've always wondered about his dreams and why he never remembers them. Sometimes his breathing changes, body tenses, and I'm tempted to wake him but I never do, his face so sealed and self-absorbed. I lie in the dark listening for the next dream to move across him like a flame igniting pieces of the day. When he reaches to save something, his arms twitch and he cries out from a shadow throat trying to find its voice.
Nancy Lagomarsino

LOOKING BACK

Each morning I assemble myself out of images from my dreams, the way I will after death when things I hardly noticed stay with me like old photographs of times no one can recall -- someone told us to smile, touched our lips with red, sharpened the wheat, filled in my grandmother's hair, my grandfather's cheeks, until it hardly mattered that we were together. But in one dream last night my true grandparents beckoned from the twilit pantry and I followed, youth clinging to me like pollen. Everything seemed familiar, both to the child moving forward and to myself looking back, remembering.
All night I trapeze between the husband in my bed and the stranger in my dreams. Miles apart, both men sleep lightly, arms spread wide on sheets taut as safety nets, anxious crowds murmuring in their throats. In that split second while my body decides to go no higher, I look at the one below me, his eyeglasses balanced on tired hands, and I think, "that is my husband," or "that is the other one," in his namelessness more powerful, like the shy acrobat who finishes with the whole troupe on his shoulders.

How can I stay still, down where I'm wanted? And what do I want, besides performing for sleeping bodies? Besides men? Besides the bodies of sleeping me, innocent in spangles and tights? Never mind, as long as someone's ready when I plummet from the top of the tent. It's part of the act to need someone that much.
Kate Crane McCarthy

NIGHT PATROL

I am leaning, arching, my arm cocked, my hand curled around a splendidly turned spear which I intend to plunge any minute into the heart of the Tyranosaurus Rex who menaces me. The Rex tightens his green reptilian lips, bares his ugly, unflossed teeth. I arch another inch, search for dinosaur solar plexus. And then, bingo, offstage: a dog yips! I arch again, but it's no use. I've lost my concentration, lost my place. The Rex shrivels away. The dog yips again. And I open my eyes on a dark and thin Los Angeles night.

Goddamn dog. I was rather enjoying the challenge. Spearing dinosaurs. I'll have to write that one down. Combatting old problems at last, perhaps? Or wasting my time poking holes in moot points, extinct threats?!

Goddamn dog. He yips again. He or she. What's the problem, anyway? Why don't they let it in? What kind of person keeps a dog out all night? Don't they know some of us are trying to sleep? I'm really awake now. Good for two hours at least. Two good hours on the night patrol.

I thought I was getting over this insomnia nonsense. Wouldn't you know as soon as the kids start sleeping through the night, I stop? That's motherhood. If anyone would ask me what motherhood is about I would say sleep deprivation. But now they say sleep deprivation cures depression. That's a good one. I suppose that means depression's not my problem. Something else.

Kate Crane McCarthy/Night Patrol

You're stressed out, honey. Loosen up! Don't be so anxious. I run my fingers over my face, searching for occult signs of anxiety.

But what have I got to be anxious about, really? Besides money. My body, maybe? My cardiac-pulmonary inefficiency? My deflated mush-stomach? My breasts--poor beaten, elbowed mother's breasts that David claims to so adore? Or my children--sweet, pure things waiting to be traumatized no matter what I do? Or because of it! I am The One, after all, the Big M. Years from now they'll be telling people--psychiatrists?--what I was--am--like. Of course, by then I'll be different. I'll get over my aerophobia. I'll be svelte, self-confident. And I'll have my career. I'll be a grown up. I'll polish my nails and wax my legs and I'll know what to do about pubic hair when I wear a bathing suit. Maybe by then the styles will change. Maybe by then the killer bees will be here, or the earthquake will have struck, or no one will give a damn about pubic hair because nuclear winter will have blackened the world!

It looks like nuclear winter right now, it's so damn dark.

Now that's a thought. What if the Russians attacked in the middle of the night, say, at Vegas? Who would know? We'd sleep through the explosion and wake up to nuclear night. I look at the clock just to make sure it's not mid-morning, but the clock--goddamn ugly green digital clock--is blinking "12:00" over and over. The power went out!

I hate these clocks. Whoever thought of clocks that blink "12:00" instead of stopping should be shot. This clock nags me: "Fix me, you idiot!" it blinks. What's wrong with stopping? That's the trouble today. You can never just stop, take a moment. No wonder I can't sleep. I'm like
this clock, my brain a blinking blob of liquid crystal. If I weren't so tired I might get out of bed and reset the stupid clock, but what's the point? The kids'll wake us anyway. Goddamn ugly green blinking clock. I roll over and stare into David's back. He begins to snore. And the dog yips on, a mournful tune.

I close my eyes, then open them wide. And what's the matter with circles, I'd like to know? Can't have circles anymore. Oh no. Not on clocks, telephones, cars. You never see them. Circles are out. Squares are in, rectangles, trapezoids—anything that has a point. The day will come when circles are antiques. People will start collecting them, swapping them. Then we'll go through circle nostalgia. Then finally they'll discover some form more basic than the circle—something that's been here all along but got lost. The Mayans had it, and the Druids. And then they'll look back on us as "The Age of Circularity" and marvel as to how we got along. And I swear, I could tell them, I don't know. You just do what you have to do.

But now, it occurs to me, I still don't know what time it is, and that can be very irritating. Suddenly, I really want to know. For one thing, I want to know how much time I have before reveille. And for another, I just want to know, like when you hear a scream and look at the clock just in case someone was murdered. I mean, maybe I woke up for a reason, telepathy or something. It must be getting towards morning, I decide, because a bird is singing its sweet lungs out. I lift my head to look out the window.

The night is still, moonless. I look towards the hill and downtown, but tonight there is no red aura hovering in the sky, no Hollywood glow. This is strange. Times must be tough. Or perhaps Holly-
wood is blacked-out, like we must have been. I look for stars, so rare in L.A., but the sky is empty, washed opaque with smog or fog. A chill slips through me. Whatever the hour, it is the dead of night.

David snores, gulps at the air. I feel reassured. I plump the pillows and arrange them all around me—one between my knees, one behind the small of my back, one under my head. I love my pillows. I could almost go to sleep if it weren't for that bird that keeps singing. Now why should a bird sing in the dead of night? A barking dog is one thing, but a bird?

Birds sing, I thought, to establish territory, or to sound a warning of some sort. So what's this bird's problem? What's it trying to do? Something must be wrong. Birds don't sing in the dead of night for no reason. And why does that goddamn dog keep barking? And why did the power go out, anyway? Santa Anas? An earthquake upstate? Or sabotage? Even, maybe, local sabotage, like someone fiddling with the fuse box!


What was that? I hear the gate creak, and then—a footstep. A definite footstep! A little creaky squishy footstep in the dead of night! My heart ka-booms, and I think, of course. That explains it! Someone's out there! That's why the dog's barking' that's why the bird sings. They're sending signals, warnings. Animals do that!

I hear a rumble now, far away, the soft thumpa-thumpa of a helicopter. Cops must be looking for someone, a prowler, a crook, and here he is, found
his way into my backyard! Fuck! A crook! I wish that goddamn bird would shut up so I could hear!

A crook! A madman maybe! A night stalker! A schizo! What did I read? There are something like ten thousand dianosed schizophrenics on the loose in California! And what about all the undiagnosed schizophrenics? Must be a least a hundred thousand. And I bet they're all in Southern California to keep warm for the winter. I would be, if I were nuts. No wonder someone's in my back yard! Shit! A goddamn schizo! A stalker!

But Jesus, it was lucky I woke up! I must be in tune with the animals. We could have slept through this and been slaughtered. It happens. You hear about that kind of thing--an entire family, bingo. Throats slashed, bullets through the temples, blood everywhere. But now, I have to think. Where are the kids? David snuffles loudly and I shove him again. I just can't believe how men can sleep! Men and children. So trusting. That's why they invented mothers, I'm sure of it--to keep watch. What was that now? Rustling? Are they setting a fire? They? More than one?

Christ! Where are the kids? In their rooms, of course, but what I mean is, I have to make a plan. I have to sneak past the sliding glass doors without being seen--if the schizos see me there's no telling what they might do. So I have to be very careful. Then I'll get the kids, sneak back here without waking them--I couldn't bear their crying at a time like this--so that means two trips, one for each, put them on the couch. All without waking David. Men need to sleep. Anyway, he'd just tell me I was crazy. It's only the wildlife out there. But men don't understand these things. And then, even if I could convince him, he'd do something stupid like go outside with a flashlight--only to get
Kate Crane McCarthy/Night Patrol

axed in the back! A goddamn B Movie--Metro section of the Times! Jesus!

What next? I know. I'll trip the burglar alarm. But if I push the panic button I'll wake everybody up and anyway, you never can tell with schizos. They might get scared away, or they might consider the siren a sort of call to arms and start shooting blindly. So what I could do is punch out the silent signal--the one you're supposed to use when someone comes up behind you with a gun when you're unlocking the door. But then the company would call to make sure it isn't a mistake, and David would wake up and grab the phone and tell them yes, it's all a mistake, not to worry, and hang up before I could explain! But maybe what I could do is punch out the signal and then call them, let them know it isn't a mistake, they should send the big man with the gun and the stick and the light. That's what I'll do!

But first I'll listen some more.

I try to be still, but I'm not good at silence. Who is anymore? All this crap about speaking up, getting heard. No one knows how to be quiet. Constant noise nowadays. Constant noise and constant light. So much goddamn stimuli it's all you can do just to hear and see, let alone think.

The bird sings. The dog barks. David snores. I breathe. The schizos scratch-scratch then stop. Now I think they're on the roof. Could they try to force the skylight? Or drop chloroform down the chimney? I remember hearing about a family who was chloroformed. They woke up with terrible headaches and an empty house. Well, at least they weren't slaughtered. At least the crooks who chloroformed them weren't schizos!

Suddenly there's a crash outside. What the fuck is going on, I almost say aloud, and sit up,
straight up in bed, pulling the covers off David. That was no garbage can, I think, as I climb out of bed. Nope. That was too loud, and it came from the wrong side of the house! Jesus, I'm freezing! I have to put some clothes on. I can't go running around naked. The schizos might take advantage of me. They might take advantage anyway, but I wouldn't want to tempt them.

But first I'll go to the bathroom. "Laura?" Oh shit! Now I've done it. "Laur?" he asks again.

"What?" I whisper hoarsely.
"Are you okay?"
"Yes."
"Can't you sleep?"
"No. I'm sorry I woke you."
"What's the matter honey?"
"Nothing," I say slowly, considering my options. "I just can't sleep. Did you hear a crash?"

"No. Come on back to bed. I'll hold you. Want me to rub your back a little?"
"I'll be there in a minute. I'm just going to the bathroom." I close the lid but don't flush. I climb back into bed and David puts his arms around me.

"David?" I ask. "Do you love me?"
"Of course I love you!" What a silly question. Now get some sleep." He kisses me and rubs my back.

A wind picks up and between the laughs and sighs of eucalyptus leaves and David's soft purr, I forget about the scratching. It's better this way, I think, as I drift away. If I go looking for schizos in the dead of night, what good can come of it?

In the morning the children race down the hall, throw open the door and climb into bed with
us. I yawn and reflexively look at the clock, ridiculous clock, blinking patiently. The dog, I notice, has ceased barking, but the bird, sweet bird, still sings.
LEARNING TO LIVE WITH NIGHTMARES

No one's responsible for tricks the mind plays awake or sleeping. At night, I dream my life ends at Da Nang, but here I am, watching my wife make breakfast for children who weren't born overseas. Who am I, a ghost? Safe on this side of morning, no rockets, I've stopped reaching to check for wounds, I'm reaching to lace my shoes, my own shoes.
George Mills

NO ONE SEES THE SUN IN A DREAM

He has the dream down to one person. One man, one moon.

He has the notion darkness is a liberating color.

He's out in a boat taking a close look.

You might call this the dream of the close look.

His eyes absorb the darkness cast by a rogue sun.

Tick tick: the marrow clock.
He rows

As toward a diagram of what's missing.

As toward a cup of neighbor's light.
George Mills

SONNET FOR FLORRIE

Last night for a long time hand in hand we watched the evening from below, the colors pouring into night, then slipped apart into sleep.

Now a hint of light at the windows, first light squared-- your ankles buried deep in night in case the final dream goes wild.

Breathing in your sleeping sky, I want to seize your hand & run, on & on ahead of the light, pursued by the ineffable,

As far behind us day breaks, plate glass in a city street.
Suzanne Owens

trying to sleep after a goodbye weather change

my eyelids whoop open like flowered parasols shading me from summer fantasies of you and from its body I disconnect the phones howling head as I disconnect myself your voice wades through miles and miles in the teeth of rain arrives soaked I float on six honeycombed holes dimpled at my ear your voice splatters through them over me strange

how a hesitant work like a swerving weather front changes the direction of a hurricane determines the pattern tips the lip of the moon's bowl spills lightning crackles wire sparks brain short circuits eyes glitters arms forks fingertips illuminates hands furrows legs ignites body and spiked I am
Suzanne Owens/trying to sleep...

down
have no
insulation
burn out like
rain sizzles down windows
drips off sills water
water floods my head
over you
the melting phone keeps me
afloat I tread water at sea
fathom whirlpools through
twisted cord run afoul
no dock in sight and

even now in sleep my
eyes drip like
folded black
umbrellas
leaning
against
walls
Christopher Parker

ZHIVAGO'S GHOST

This morning before the sun rose,
The empty trees surrounded the frozen lake
Like the aura of a healer's hand
And the icy fingers of each cove and tributary
Wove in the uncertain light.

The neighborhood dogs were silent.
They do not howl at this hour even at prowlers
They just look up, waiting for judgement.
The houses sang low: slow smoke, slow smoke.

Everything was frozen and the children dozed.
And when the first mallard called a warning
A baby's breath was shortened to a cough.
The fish moved to the deepest parts of the lake
Where the old Dodge truck sank last year
When contractors drove it across the ice,
The back filled with concrete chisels
And a bucket of floats that won't.

Just before the ice fishermen walk,
There's a glow off to the east
And the mist of trees becomes a net for dawn.
Then the somewhat welcome sound of motors
Drilling holes into the ice.
And those who must rise this early breathe
In the zero air that settles in the houses
Where the coal stoves have gone cold.
Christopher Parker/Zhivago's Ghost

There's a whistle in the window—
Zhivago's ghost I guess, and you,
Between the comforter and the frost that's formed
On the vase with the frozen rose I handed you
And another pressed in a volume of Pushkin,
Utter as best you can this morning
The words that let my eyes see you plainly
Even as the sun blinds these eyes
That peer onto this darkened pond in wonder.
Cynthia Pederson

FOUR A.M.

the reel of my dream
ends.
the crackling grey frames
flecked with dust
and strands of magnified hair
come to a flapping finish

I untwist and find
(as at the end of every
dark movie)
I need to go

the bare white beam
of the bathroom
blinds like a stage light
in my eyes.
my pillow-creased cheek
is out of focus.

like a movie you've slept through
I can't remember any plot.
all I know is that my jaw
has been set stiffly
back into my face
and the clenched rows of my teeth
may have seen this film before
MY COUCH IS HAUNTED

I'm sure
of it.
If you sit
anywhere else in
the room, it invites
you over.
When you comply,
it isn't happy
with mere sitting.
"Lie down," it sighs and
you are powerless.
Good intentions are not
enough, this thing feeds
on aching backs,
sore feet.
Expanding, its orange glow
enfolds your pains,
mesmerizes your mind,
encourages the day to drift
away.
Hypnotizing, it purrs,
"Close your eyes"
and you will
you will
Marnie Purple

GATHER SUNSET, THEN DREAM THE MOON AWAKE

Sleep against the North wall, where the wind will not find you. Pile blankets before dark and scatter mothballs in the closets. It is the season of retreat, of hope. What survives will be captured by sunlight and transformed while what is lost in the brief midnight of winter, will not be mourned.

Like the lost mittens of your childhood these present securities, vehicles of fortune will be discarded. You no longer will be afraid of dusk, the moment when the sun lends a pink mantle to the hills and the moon prepares the bath in the hollows. All the windows of the house will rattle, as you lie there in a nest of quilts. You are not dreaming, the moon is full, awake.
SLEEP

At 8:30 the neighbors up the hill have turned out their lights. After wind all day it is calm. The kitchen fills with the smell of garlic. I am reading a book on memory, wondering what is the connection between the word memory and the phrase I remember. Noticing my left foot wrap itself around my right, I'm sure both have a life separate from my own. I look again and see the white socks my father wore, his tense face gone slack, his body lying on a couch in front of a television. Inside the socks his feet are in constant motion no matter how hard he sleeps.
Propped against stiff pillows, 
semi-upright, 
I resist sleep; 
the speckled afternoon light 
absorbs all thoughts 
of unfinished work. 
As I glance at the clock 
I am aware that time floats; 
with a feeling of loss 
I fall asleep. 

Time has floated... 
away; the house has become cold; 
night replaced the afternoon 
as quickly as a shade pulled. 
This time I run back to sleep, 
the feeling of loss for 
faces I can't quite remember. 

The silence of the house tolls 
and I force myself back; 
the time lost is now irrelevant. 
I must awaken, busy myself, 
make sacrilege of the peace 
before the final loss, 
the absence of my children, 
descends.
TRANSCENDING DAY

As if a gentle reminder, the rain in seldom drops, breaks against the windows.

It is sometime between late afternoon and night. The fog swirls in the grass leaving tidepools of light and shade. What is white looks florescent blue, what is brown looks black, what is green is still green.

Tree trunks, close by, are beyond color: areas of a void, they are the first to step into the dream realm of night.

After a silence, the cicadas begin their chanting; we are being prepared. Some of us will remember the journey.
Alison Townsend

METAMORPHOSES: THE DREAM I WOULD HAVE OF YOU

In the poem that comes just before sleep you tell me a story of a man, not unlike yourself, who stands at the edge of a meadow, and a woman, in whom I recognize my body and gestures but not my eye color or name.

In the story you are walking away from me. A plowed field echoes between us. The evening light quilts shadows into the brightness gathered by your yellow shirt. I am very still, almost a statue. When I reach to touch you my hands close on travel, the maps made by wind.

Just before you leave you hand me a stone – an agate, clear in places, but most of it misty, like a snowstorm brewing beneath glass. A red island appears in the stone's center. It quivers with a pulse regular as dreaming. Breath rises, steadies itself against my hand.

In turn, I hand you lilies, each one a thin scroll of possible endings which unfurl, like parchment, to reveal secrets rooted within us, memories dipped in green. In the heart of each flower smokey horns of stamen claim their pollen as simply the silence sown beneath our tongues.
We exchange these gifts. Lilies light the road before wilting. The agate gleams for an instant before it hits the field and disappears. Fog thickens in the air between us. In the forest some animal noise reverberates against the dark.
Alison Townsend

EVENING SONG

for David Glyer

Sleep now. Swallows dip low over our shoulders.

On the beach at Montana de Oro the wind slips to a whisper rooted between sweet plums on a slowly disappearing hill.

In our footsteps, the sea, blushing like a young girl in her own mirror, quickens for an instant, then shivers, wraps her face in fog.
Habitual the early riser
listens for weather,
the first green movement of leaves.
The house an envelope of sleep; the fox
nibbling elderberry shoots in the road's soft shoulder.
She dresses against a chill,
more than the room's;
last night's dream
a prison camp, each tent a cloister
peaked and cramped. Faces
crowding the openings like flies
swarming dark meat. She moves quickly,
in a hurry it seems, not to be touched
by hands that open,
her passage to the river
slowed by those who keep falling
only to drown
in the banks of barbed wire.
Nothing, she thinks,
could be as bad as this
and awakes. The dog
in the one slab of light
heating the cold night floor,
the laurel a bell of tongues
in the arbor blooming.
That summer dryness grew
like the stale air in parlors
heavy, embroidered to our skin.
We dressed in our mothers' laces and scarves,
smeared lipstick thick as welts:
*Midnight, Scarlet, Purple Passion* and played.
The apple tree at the end of the drive,
branches pendulous with fruit
not yet the color of rubies.

In my friend's house
Christ hung on the wall
pinned in place like a butterfly
I had seen once under glass--
not a muscle moved, though I quivered
above the long case of tethered wings and legs.

She showed me her parents'
twin beds, white spreads,
the long slats of bare wood
between where they lay,
like towels on a beach
held still with stones.

That night I dreamt my house
was falling--shoes, nightgown,
even the dog racing past, ears
as if they were on fire.
I ran to my parents' room
and hid in the corner
watching them breathe.
Mimi White/Green Rain

There I slept and dreamt of the gingko.
At the end of the playground
it grew out of gravel
and small tufts of dry grass.
Like a tin soldier,
like his one-legged ballerina.

Down the steep lot
we ran for it,
heart and blood pounding harder
than feet on pavement
until we could see each leaf,
each delicate green fan
flutter and lift in the wind
its tender, dark-veined side.
CONTRIBUTORS

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