

Sleep Water

The man clicks his teeth in sleep, brief twitches of his body which he remarks upon later, movements which are small falling and landing moments, so that he is suspended and supported at once. He sleeps well and I envy him.

When he wakes and I am with him, I always ask for his dreams: some are of ants, some of long hallways or school rooms, some of women and sex. Sometimes I appear in them, but sometimes I know he says *we* as a small kindness to me, to think that we remain together even in sleep. Each night, I place a small cup of water by the bed, drink half, leave the rest as an offering for our dreams.

Someone once told me to do this because water will collect the nightmares, the screams, the half-asleep wanderings, the terrors, the bad, bad dreams. Never drink the water, she told me, pour it out, but living in the desert has taught me not to waste it—even this liquid of my nightmares—so I choose my heartiest plant and dump the sleep water there. Most nights, the man sleeps away from me, dreaming long dreams, sometimes two a night, and my vining plant, this variegated, leafy thing I inherited from my long-dead grandmother, grows leafier and stranger by the day, reaching fingers toward the sun like it never knows night. And this is the effort of my dreams, of the water, rooting the past into what is most present.

The plant only knows the wetness of the earth around it, or the dryness (—though now, sleeping as I do with him, with this jar beside my bed, the dryness never comes to the plant).

If my dreams ever return, I fear I'll dream of smoke lines or razors or the yellow eyes of wild animals, all things on the edge of fear. Though I never pray, I pray the water will swallow the dreams, the man my fears, my sleep my waking. Each night, I fall to the altar of sleep and wake; each night calls and says:

*Enter. Drown just a little.*