Dream a Little Dream

An Honors Creative Project

by

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My Honors Creative Project consists of four short stories I have written or revised throughout this semester. Each story contains an example of personal experimentation in writing style and reflects one of several contexts with which dreams can be associated.

My first story, "Thunderstorms, Waterfalls, and Red Red Rain," was influenced by my Women's Literature and Canadian Women's Literature courses where violence toward women was prevalent in the readings. My desire to write about this aspect of literature influenced me to revise this story as an experiment in writing about issues that concern women. In this story, the dream is significant because of the foreshadowing aspect it portrays.

"Caitlin and the Scarf with Forty Shades of Green" includes dreams that are both negative and positive predictions of the future. Inspired by an Honors Colloquium in fairy tales and folklore, my first attempt at writing in this genre includes such characteristics of a moral lesson, the mystical connection between an old woman and a young girl, and a Prince falling in love with a commoner.

In the next two stories, dreams are revelations about the characters. Flashbacks and dreams divulge the protagonist's innermost desires in "If" and disclose hidden truths in "Nightmare." Both stories also include experimentation in the usage of verb tense inspired by Margaret Laurence's The Diviners. Present tense is used in the flashback and dream sequences to add to the suspense and empathy felt by the reader.

These experimentations in writing found throughout my collection of short stories made this creative project challenging. I was able to expand upon my creative writing process and enjoyed doing so. I plan to continue editing and revising these stories and wish to apply the new techniques I have learned to future exercises. The context of dreams not only plays a large part in our lives, but also provides the writer with a vast range of ideas that I look forward to exploring further.
Thunderstorms, Waterfalls, and Red Red Rain
Everything is calm and quiet, almost too quiet. There's tension in the air. Animals and people are scurrying for shelter from the black mass overhead, ready to unleash its force in a tremendous and terrible torrent. The wind begins to pick up until it is at a low roar and the smaller trees are flattened almost parallel to the ground by its power. The few people still outside push their way through the gale - head first, bent over like the trees. The sky reminds me of waves cresting and thundering as they break along a rocky coast. After the thunder reaches a deafening pitch and the wind is shrieking loudly, lightning parts this sea of black storm clouds and illuminates the earth in its eerie, silver-purple light. A light sprinkle begins and increases into a drenching downpour. People have found safety inside stores, restaurants, or their houses. The streets and sidewalks are now empty.

I sit on my bed with my elbows on the windowsill, my head resting on my palms, and my nose pressed up against the screen as I look around at all these sights that accompany a March storm. Inside my brick house, holed up against the storm's fury, I feel protected and do not fear the awesome power of thunderstorms. I love to relax and enjoy the sounds and smells that drift up to me on the damp, refreshing wind.

I hear a symphony in the storm, with thunder as the bass drum when it rolls and the crash of a cymbal when it cracks. The harmony contains the sounds of rain on the windows and on the roof. The wind carries the melody line as it blows.
through chimes and across the top of empty bottles in the
gutters. Also traveling on the wind is the crisp, clean smell
of an early Spring shower washing away the man-made filth which
penetrates every desolate corner and alley of the city.

This evening the storm makes me feel reminiscent and
philosophical as I look out at the deserted streets. I am alone
in my reverie. Rain carried through the screen by the wind
splashes me in the face and I focus again on the stormy sky.
I begin to entertain the thought that the clouds are putting
on a show just for me. Their magnificent and sometimes
terrifying display of power is something I will never truly
understand. This display puts me in my place and makes me
remember that I am human, destructible, and fallible.

I lie down on my bed, close my eyes, and listen to the
rain until I fall asleep. I dream of beautiful fairies and
unicorns that surround a waterfall giving off rainbows in its
mist. The unicorns are snow white with horns of solid gold
and hooves of silver. Some have wings that they extend for
the sunlight to dance on. The fairies flit about forming figures
and shapes in the sky for the enjoyment of all who watch. The
waterfall sounds musically off the rocks below and the sound
is combined with the fairies' singing. Suddenly, in the middle
of a formation, the fairies stop singing and seem suspended
in midair. The waterfall also appears to stop flowing. I can
hear a far off sound in the surrounding woods, like that of
a chain saw. The fairies and unicorns look frightened by the
noise and soon the fairies flit away and the unicorns gracefully gallop out of sight. The waterfall disappears and all that is left are bone dry rocks. The noise increases and I want to run away before it envelops me. The sound finally pierces through my dream and I realize that the phone is ringing.

Still groggy with sleep, I reach over to answer the phone. There is no reply so I hang up and prop myself up on my elbow to look out the window. It has stopped raining and the sky is illuminated by a full moon occasionally eclipsed by clouds. I lie there for a few more minutes trying to push the sleep from my eyes. When I am finally awake I feel a presence in the room and become incredibly terrified. I think that maybe I could roll over and pretend to go back to sleep but a voice abruptly breaks the silence and greets me into the world of the living.

"Mornin', Sis. Rise and shine."

"What are you doing here, Kristin? You scared the living daylights out of me! Fine, go ahead and laugh. I'm glad at least one of us finds this amusing." Pretty soon I found myself laughing with her.

"What say we go get something to eat. How about Charlie's down by the railroad tracks?"

My stomach begins to grumble in agreement. I put on a light-weight sweater, brush my hair, and am ready to leave.

Ten minutes later we arrive at Charlie’s. Kristin and I are the only customers there because it is late on a Tuesday
night. We both order Charlie's Catch of the Day - hamburger with everything, fries and a beer. It'll be a few minutes before our meals are ready so we go over to the jukebox, choose three of our favorite songs, and begin a game of pool. After finishing one game of pool and starting another one, our food arrives.

As we are eating, two young guys come in and order a couple of beers. They look around, see us sitting there and ask if they can join us. Kristin tells them to have a seat and the room is filled with a deafening roar. I feel like I am by the waterfall again and that I should run, but in reality it is only the train on the tracks outside. We talk for a while and play some pool. The guys invite us to a party on the other side of town and Kristin immediately accepts the invitation, but I hesitate for a moment trying to convince myself that I don't want to be a party pooper. Finally I relent and we pay our bills and leave, Kristin and I in her car and the guys in their car.

Once we are at the party I begin to get a tremendous headache and feel as if the buzzing in my ears will never stop. I am again reminded of my dream but I ignore the warning and pass the headache off as a result of drinking on a nearly empty stomach. We stay at the party for a couple of hours before Kristin and I decide to leave. When we get out to Kristin's car we discover that it won't start. Nobody has any jumper cables and it has started to rain again so the guys offer to take us home or at least drop us off at a bus stop. We consent
and get in their car, Kristin and I both in the back seat and
the guys in the front. We don't really want the guys to find
out where either of us lives but we don't know when the next
bus will be around and the rain has increased to a downpour
by this time. My head begins throbbing again and I can't wait
to get home and climb back into bed.

The guys drop us off in front of my apartment building
and say good night. The rain has diminished so we decline their
offer to escort us, shielded by their umbrellas, to my door.
As Kristin and I walk up the path I notice that they don't leave.
I figure that they are waiting to see if we make it into the
apartment safely. Just as we get to the stairway, a car door
squeeks open and slams close. Looking back toward the car,
I see one of the guys lighting a cigarette. I continue on up
the steps in front of Kristin to unlock the door, but before
I can get my key in the lock there are quick footsteps on the
wet sidewalk. One of the guys runs up the steps and grabs
Kristin. They struggle and he knocks her down the stairs.
I am torn between getting help or saving Kristin myself. I
choose to try and help her myself, hoping someone will see us.

Hurrying down the steps, I almost run into the guy's knife.
He tries to cut me but I kick him in the groin and he falls
to the ground. Out of the corner of my eye, I see Kristin
struggle to her feet and run up the stairs to get help. I hear
the car start as the other guy drives off, probably figuring
he would get in deep trouble if he stayed around. The adrenalin
pumping through my veins gives me the strength to remove the knife from the attacker's grasp. He manages to roll on top of me and wraps his hands around my neck, trying to strangle me. Suddenly his face becomes a mask of disbelief, that turns to fear, that turns to hatred as I stick his knife into his heart. I knock him off of me and collapse, exhausted, onto one of the steps. I sit there alone, while I wait for Kristin, and watch the rain wash away the blood as the fairies and unicorns dance and play.
Caitlin and the Scarf with Forty Shades of Green
There once was a beautiful young girl named Caitlin who lived with her mother and her brother, Cormac, in a small thatch-roofed cabin in the woods. Caitlin was a day-dreamer and often wandered off following a butterfly or going to find pretty flowers. Unfortunately, she did this when she was supposed to be watching after her little brother while her mother was spinning. One day, her mother had to visit her sick sister in another village and left Caitlin in charge of the house and Cormac for three days. The mother left early in the morning in order to reach her sister's before sunset. She told Caitlin to pay careful attention to her brother until she returned.

"I'm tying three pieces of string around your finger as reminders. One string is to remind you of me, and how much I love you. And this one is to help you remember your brother so you won't wander off."

Caitlin looked at the third string which was bright white compared to the dull green of the other two. "What is this third one for, mother?"

"It is to remind you to take care of yourself, Caitlin," responded her mother affectionately. "There is money in the hiding place to be used for food while I am away. Be sure not to spend it otherwise. Be careful not to look at all of the pretty knick-knacks, gadgets, and cloth that you may be tempted to buy. You will not only be depriving yourself of food, but you will make your brother go hungry as well."
Caitlin promised to buy only food and her mother left with a hug and a kiss. Cormac was still asleep so Caitlin went back to bed until it was time for breakfast. Soon after she closed her eyes, she drifted off to dream. She dreamed of a beautiful forest, filled with birds and flowers of the most splendid colors. Spinning in circles, she tried to absorb all of the vivid hues. When she could spin no more, for fear of getting to dizzy, she sat down to rest. In front of her she saw a dirt path leading off into the heart of the woods. When she was rested, she began to wander through the woods following the path, until she came to a gray shack. The house seemed out of place compared to the amazing beauty surrounding it. She felt drawn toward the shack and ventured inside through the open door. A woman sat at a table, doing needlework. She was wearing a gray shawl that covered her face and made her body shape indefinable. As Caitlin drew nearer to the old woman, she could see that it was a scarf that the old lady was stitching. Suddenly, the woman spoke, startling Caitlin who did not think her presence was known.

"Hello, dear. Don't be afraid. I have been expecting you. Come here. Do you like this scarf?"

"Yes, it is very pretty," answered Caitlin after she recovered from shock.

"It is yours." The woman laid the scarf out on the table. Caitlin cautiously approached the table to take a closer look at the scarf. She saw that the scarf had wildflowers
stitched in a variety of shades of green.

The old woman repeated, "The scarf is yours. But it comes with a warning. If you chose to take it, you will have to give up something very dear to you."

Caitlin began to reach for the scarf, but before she touched it, the dream faded. She was awakened by her brother gently shaking her arm. It was time for breakfast.

They ate their porridge and bread in silence. After the meal was finished, Caitlin cleaned up the wooden dishes and bowls and made sure that Cormac was properly dressed to go to the marketplace. After warning him to not get dirty, she went into her mother's room and removed the coins from their hiding place under a loose floorboard. She then attended to herself to make herself look presentable in hopes of attracting a young man's look. She knew she had delicate features and a comely face, but she feared that her position in life would prevent her from being happy. When she was satisfied with her appearance, she took her brother's hand and headed toward town.

The marketplace was all abuzz with activity. There were vendors from both nearby and distant places and many people had come to look over the wares, gossip, or participate in some of the sporting. Caitlin kept a careful watch on her brother as she shopped in the part of the marketplace reserved for produce and grain. Once she had finished buying what she needed, she led Cormac over to the section containing toys, to quiet his cries and pleas. While Cormac was intent on a demonstration
of some wooden toys, Caitlin looked around the marketplace. Her gaze instantly fell on a booth where a young man was selling scarves. The dream surfaced briefly and she saw the old woman's scarf before her. She became enchanted and walked as if in a trance to the booth, forgetting her brother. The young man's attention was immediately attracted by her beauty and innocence. He knew by her fascination with all the colorful scarves, that he could easily sell her one if he complimented her looks. So, he picked up a rather costly scarf that was setting to the side and handed it to her.

"This scarf is very rare and I had it setting aside because I couldn't bear to part with it, but seeing you has changed my mind. The beauty of the scarf is as rare as the beauty of your face. I want you to have it so I can remember how it brings out the color of your eyes. And because it means so much to me that you will have it, I will offer it to you at a special price. I would freely give it to you but my father would be very upset."

"Won't you get in trouble for marking it down, then?" questioned the now blushing Caitlin.

"I can easily mark up the price on another scarf that a rich woman will buy without blinking an eye at the amount."

"Well, how much is it? I'm not sure I can afford such a beautiful scarf."

"How much money do you have?" Caitlin then told him what she had left of her mother's hard-earned money. Upon hearing
how little she had, the sides of his mouth quivered slightly but imperceptibly into a frown which quickly returned to a smile. He had hoped to sell it for more, but realized that his father would be glad to have the scarf sold. The truth was, the vendor had been unable to sell the scarf because the design and colors were not pleasing to those who could afford his scarves. But, because Caitlin was of the sort who finds beauty in everything, especially nature, the scarf appealed to her. The scarf had a border filled with the forty shades of green resembling Ireland. The interior of the scarf had purple wildflowers that reminded Caitlin of the flowers growing in the woods that she saw in her dream. It was then that Caitlin realized the scarf the young man was offering her was the same one the old woman had stitched.

After a short pause while he figured up his loss, the vendor told Caitlin that the very price of the scarf was what she said she had. Caitlin was overjoyed and paid the man. She then quickly tied the scarf in her hair feeling that she had received a bargain. And it seemed fate that the price of the scarf equaled exactly the amount of money she had left. She also began to believe that her dream was coming true.

The old woman's warning was dismissed as Caitlin walked wistfully around the market showing off her new purchase which she felt certain increased her beauty. It was not until she glanced at her hand and saw the three pieces of string, that she remembered her brother. She began to frantically look around
the marketplace, until she came to the booth of toys where she had last seen Cormac. She described her brother to the man there and asked him if he saw the child wander off. He replied that he had seen him leave. The vendor remembered Caitlin's brother because the boy had begun to cry when he realized he didn't know any one around him. An older nursemaid heard the commotion and approached the child to see if she could assist. Finding out that the child was alone, the old woman assumed he had been abandoned. She took the boy with her to the castle where she lived because she had been the Prince's nursemaid.

Caitlin was horrified when she heard this. She knew that Cormac would be well taken care of but she dreaded telling her mother about what happened. Caitlin asked the man for directions to the castle, thanked him for his help, and left the marketplace.

As she walked along the road to the castle, Caitlin thought of the warning that she would have to give up something dear to her if she wanted the scarf. She knew now that her love for her family should come before her own vane desires. She had disappointed her mother and let down her brother all for a scarf. And what would the nursemaid think of her carelessness. Oh, and the Prince, he would surely think she was dull-witted and absent minded. She just hoped that the young Prince would not hear about her, or see her at the palace.

Unfortunately, the Prince was the first person told about the abandoned child. The Prince, being very caring and
compassionate, and young himself, insisted the boy receive the best treatment during his stay. He then told the guards that anyone claiming to be the guardian of the child should be directly brought to him for a reprimand and possibly punishment. So when Caitlin arrived and told the castle guards who she was, they immediately took her to the Prince.

The Prince, expecting a poor woman in rags who left the child because she could not care for him, was amazed when he saw Caitlin enter the room. Her youth and beauty impressed him, but he did not forget what had happened in the marketplace. By the looks of her nice clothes and expensive-looking scarf, he judged that she cared more about her looks than her brother. Caitlin, who had heard stories of the Prince's attractiveness, was also amazed by his youth and handsome features, but her guilty feelings of what happened weighed heavily on her. Caitlin's tear-streaked face and down turned head showed the Prince that she felt remorseful for what she had done. Just the same, the Prince wanted to make sure the young girl never did this again. The Prince had already devised a plan by the time Caitlin stood in front of him. He looked gravely at her and asked why he should return the child to her.

"Oh, please, your royal highness, my mother would be distraught if she could not have her little one near her," Caitlin pleaded, kneeling before the Prince.

"You should have thought of that before you wandered off. Much worse things could have happened to the innocent little
boy, you know. I think you should be grateful for all we have done."

"I am grateful, extremely grateful. If you could find it in your heart to forgive me, I would give anything to have my brother returned to me."

"Anything, hmm? Well, you may have your brother, but, after you take him home and put him into your mother's arms, you must return here. I need someone to help the cook and maids. You can be their servant until I am sure you have learned a lesson about responsibility. Agreed?"

Caitlin agreed and was joyfully reunited with her brother. The Prince insisted that they spend the night in the castle because it was getting dark. That night, as Caitlin was getting ready to go to bed, she removed the scarf from her hair and threw it into a corner. She did not want the scarf after she realized that the old woman's warning had come true. Her family was more important to her than her looks, and she promised herself that she would not forget that ever again. As she slept, she once again met the old woman in the cabin.

I see you have put your vanity aside. That is good, very good. Because of this decision, something very special will happen to you," promised the old woman.

Before Caitlin could say a word, she was awakened by a servant. Caitlin pushed the dream aside and concentrated on taking care of Cormac. Her mother returned the next evening and was greatly distressed at the story Caitlin told. She could
not bear to part with her first born but did not dare argue
with the Prince who had been so kind and benevolent. So, the
next morning, with her few clothes, Caitlin departed to return
to the palace.

At the palace, she reported first to the cook to help
with lunch, then she helped the maid before returning to the
kitchen to fix dinner. Without daydreaming once, Caitlin
continued this cycle and finished other duties assigned to her.
At the end of one week, the Prince called Caitlin to meet with
him. Her diligent work had not gone unnoticed by him and he
realized that she had finally accepted responsibility. When
Caitlin arrived, the Prince was once again awe-struck by what
he saw. Caitlin was wearing dirty rags but the dust on her
face did not hide her natural beauty. She did not even seem
to care about her appearance as she had before.

"Caitlin, I have been checking up on you and know that
you have done a wonderful job. Didn't daydream or dawdle once.
I think you have finally learned the importance of
responsibility. Now, you have two choices about your future.
One, you can return home."

"Oh, could I? I have missed my family dearly. But what
is my other choice?"

"You could remain here, not as a servant, but as my wife,"
the Prince humbly proposed.

Caitlin was pleasantly surprised and accepted his proposal.
She returned home the next day and told her mother the good
news. Her family was invited to move into the palace. A few
days later, the Prince and Caitlin were married with much
celebration. As part of Caitlin's wedding gift, the prince
gave her the green and purple scarf she was wearing on the day
they met. The old woman's voice crept in to the back of her
mind.

"Take it, you have shown you are worthy of wearing it.
Always remember what it took to get it."

Caitlin accepted the scarf and tied in her hair once again.
She knew that she would no longer need to day-dream because
all of her dreams had come true.
If
I drove my Jeep Cherokee up the long lane to my trailer, and because there was no driveway I parked in what would be the front yard once grass seed was planted. I was living in the trailer temporarily until I earned the money to build a house on the lot I owned. Growing up in a small three room house with my mother and two sisters had made me yearn for a place to call my own. Even though Mom had to work two jobs after my father ran out on us, she always managed to keep the house spotless. We were taught that, no matter how little or how much we had, it was all a gift from God and should not be taken for granted. So, even if I was living in a small rusting mobile home on a dirt lot, I was glad to get home.

Once inside, I changed out of my dusty overalls and threw them in the washer already full of a week's worth of dirty clothes. I added a cup of detergent and turned the dial to start the wash. Cleaning a pile of laundry was not my idea of an enjoyable weekend activity. I grabbed a beer, and stretched out on the couch. Finally at home, I could relax and reflect on my busy work day.

When I closed my eyes, I envisioned the shining floor that I had been working on earlier today. Looking at a refinished floor that I had sanded and polished till it gleamed gave me a sense of pride. I saw each floor almost as if it was a child. Each floor started out unrefined, a diamond in the rough, until I used my skills to hone it and make it shine. The floor I had been working on that day was a startling achievement.
considering the conditions I was working in. It was the kitchen floor of a Victorian house a married couple were having remodeled. Looking back on that particular day made me extremely upset, but the memory persisted as I stared at the blank TV screen.

The day is already muggy at 8 o'clock in the morning as I drive up the lane to the Victorian house. I immediately look for the silver Jaguar that means the owners are at home. It is parked in the normal spot near the house and the heat seems to close in around me. The owners never seem to work, but instead stay at home most of the time and get in the way of the workers. Actually, it is the husband who is always under foot, while the wife is sweet and quiet. Looking at the huge, elegant Victorian house, I wonder how the husband could afford it, since it seemed he never went to work. He probably had everything given to him on a silver platter. Bet he never had to work a day in his life.

I get out of my truck, both of my dusty work boots hitting the hard dirt at the same time, sending a sharp pain up my ankles. I recover quickly and head toward the work site. Joe, my foreman, meets me halfway and tells me that I will be working in the kitchen, refinishing the floor and laying some tile. I'm glad I'm working inside on this hot day. I don't envy the guys who have to work on the roof in this humidity. This is just another perk that comes along with my job.
Inside the house, I carefully wipe my boots on the rug, but it doesn't matter because the floor is already covered with a fresh layer of dirt from someone else's shoes. I have noticed this every morning that the husband is home. He must never wipe his feet before entering the house. It could be because he thinks it doesn't make a difference while the house is being remodeled. What he doesn't know is that the dirt and sand will get embedded into the wood floors and ruin them. He's like this with everything. He takes the beautiful things around him for granted, including his wife. Like the floors, he walks all over her without giving the least bit of thought to how he hurts her. I would tell him just what I thought of him if I didn't need this job so much. If I had his house and his wife, I would certainly treat them better than he did, but I don't have time to daydream. There is work to be done.

While I am sanding the floor, the wife comes into the kitchen and asks me if I would like something to drink. Although I am inside, it is still rather warm because there are few windows in the kitchen and no air-conditioning. I think that the outside wall should be knocked down and sliding glass doors added for light and a sense of more space. I am brought out of these thoughts by the wife's sweet voice calling my name, "Ian?" I look at her, smile and answer no thank you. She smiles too and leaves. I can still remember the first time she called me by my name. I was flabbergasted. How did she know my name I thought until I remembered it was on my shirt. Funny how
she called all the workers by our first names and we didn't know hers. She was always Mrs. Robert D. Galaway. And you certainly never heard her husband call her by her first name. He always yelled, just as he did now, "Woman, where are you? I want my pop now!" On my way outside to get a tool I need, I pass by the "den" where the two of them are talking. He is talking in a low whisper, but his voice is trembling, and it sounds more like a hiss.

I can't here what he is saying, but I can feel the tension even standing outside of the door. Ready to run to the rescue if she needs my help, I wait, ears alert. Joe opens the front door and hollers that I'm needed to help on the roof. I leave, reluctant. Up on the roof, I see the man storm out of the house, stopping to strike a match against a pillar of the porch to light his cigarette before getting in his car. I want to go inside and see if she is alright, but I'm still needed on the roof. When it is time to leave, I begin to make the excuse that I need to go inside to get some of my tools, but decide against it. I don't want to lose my job, and if I go inside to talk to her, and her husband comes back, I may lose more than that. Shaking with frustration, I get in my truck and drive off.

Still shaking, I was aroused from my thoughts by the washer buzzer. Just thinking about how he treated everything and everyone around him made me angry. After loading and
starting the dryer, I finished off my beer and lied down on my couch to sleep. I dreamed about what it would be like if I had his life, his wife, that Victorian house. I would never be as callous and hateful as him. I would treat my house and my wife with the respect they deserve. If only they were mine. If . . .
Nightmare
4:04 a.m.

Chris awoke shaking from a nightmare, his face damp with cold sweat as he sat bolt upright in bed. Eyes darting fearfully around the room for a moment, he realized that he was no longer in the nightmare. It had been five years since this nightmare had invaded his sleep, and he wished it had remained that way. He looked over to his left where his wife lay beside him and was relieved to see that he had not awakened her, knowing she needed her sleep. They had a busy day ahead of them because it was his thirty-sixth birthday and they were having a party. He tried to push the memory of his nightmare from his mind as he lied down to sleep. Unfortunately, he tossed and turned for almost an hour until he finally decided to get out of bed.

The nightmare was still present in the back of his mind when he swung his feet onto the floor to go wash his face in the bathroom. Half expecting to feel underfoot the cold wooden floor of his nightmare, he was now extremely grateful for the warm plush carpeting. Even the bathroom was carpeted. He remembered how he had laughed when his wife had suggested they carpet the bathroom. But now, finding comfort in the carpeted bathroom, he realized it was not a luxury he would soon give up.

Chris washed his face with warm water, hoping to wash away the memory of his nightmare. When he looked in the mirror he did not see his own face, but instead saw the reflection of a teen-age boy with tear streaked cheeks. Chris quickly reached
for a towel and dried off his face. His own reflection met his next look in the mirror. The young boy's face had been his own, from out of the nightmare. The face he now saw also seemed to be part of a bad dream. He was only thirty-six, but looked forty-five or fifty. His hair line had receded, his hair had begun to grey around the temples, and wrinkles were beginning to form around his eyes. His father certainly did not look that old when he was Chris's age.

This thought of his father caused him to begin to wonder what his parents would think of his life-style if they were still alive. He had been raised to be thankful for the little things in life. In the Quebec wilderness where he'd spent most of his early years, a roof that didn't leak and four walls that kept out most of the cold air were signs of success. He couldn't imagine what his parents would think of his two-story house with indoor plumbing. His parents didn't have indoor plumbing until they'd moved to Maine, but even then they spent the majority of the time back in the Province of Quebec. As a child he had loved the Quebec wilderness, the rustic cabin, and living off the land. But now, he didn't even like the thought of camping for a few days. He had developed an affinity for the city and the comforts that came with it. He didn't have to hunt or chop wood for the fire.

Glancing again at his reflection, he realized it was the stress of the city that made him look and feel almost ten years older than he was. He shrugged off the memories of his parents
who were so closely tied to his nightmare, and washed his face again. He wanted to think more about the reason he could no longer stand to go into the wilderness and when this change occurred, but sleep called to him. With heavy-lidded eyes, Chris returned to bed, hoping the nightmare would not interrupt his sleep again.

7:30 a.m.

Chris was once again in front of the mirror; this time he was shaving. He couldn't help but remember his dad teaching him to shave. A chill tickled his spine making him shiver despite the robe-like warmth surrounding him in the small bathroom. One memory of his dad and shaving stood out from the others.

Chris is going outside one morning while his family is staying in Quebec. Hearing a growl behind him, he turns quickly from collecting bait to see a grizzly bear hunting for food. Chris freezes with fear but manages to let out a scream. His father hears him and runs outside. Chris blacks out, regaining consciousness a few minutes later. When he first dares to open his eyes, he sees his father but thinks he's the bear looking at him, foaming at the mouth, with blood flowing from wounds on his face. He is finally soothed by his father's voice and uncurls out of the fetal position. His dad carries him inside, once again the protector and savior. Chris realizes, once calm, that what he thought was foam was actually shaving cream. His
father had been shaving when he'd heard the scream and he had cut his face.

Blood. Chris was upset by the sight of blood. The memory of his father's blood was even worse. It was the nightmare. He sees his father bleeding and can't help. A hunting accident is what the local police liked to call it. Chris knows better. He was there. He saw the angry man point a rifle. An ex-con by the looks of his prison uniform. His father tried to reason with the gunman. The gunman didn't listen, but instead fired two shots into his father's heart. Chris was coming from the outhouse. He couldn't stop the bullet. Couldn't stop the blood.

He could see the blood so clearly in front of him now. This time it was his own. He looked in the mirror, saw the cut on his face from the razor. He grabbed a wet washcloth and washed off the blood.

9:30 p.m.

The party was over. The last couple there, Chris's best friend and his wife, had left a few minutes earlier. Chris couldn't wait to get to bed. He realized he was starting to feel the aches and pains that go along with getting older. Turning on the hot water tap to fill a water bottle for his sore knees, he watched the water swirl down the drain. His mind spun just like the cascade of clear liquid, as his thoughts slid through his mental plumbing to their final destination - a sewer of memories, filled with wasted moments and events
that were flushed by time or on purpose. Upon arrival in this sewer he found himself face to face again with his nightmare. This time it was different, there was something new. Something he had not remembered.

He is standing over the sink, watching the blood flow down the drain as the water makes crimson streams over his hands. A voice is talking in the other room. It is his mother telling him everything will be fine. She'll call the police, they'll take care of it. Let her do all the talking, only answer when spoken to. Now, listen carefully to her, this is what they'll tell the officers . . .

Knocking on the door. He turned to open the door expecting to see the police, but as he opened the bathroom door he was greeted by his wife.

"Are you coming to bed soon, Chris?"

"I'll be there in a few minutes."

"You OK? You look pale. Feeling all right?"

"Just tired, I guess. It's been a long day. I just need a good night's sleep."

"I heard you tossing around in bed last night. What was wrong?"

"Did I wake you? Sorry if I did. I just had a nightmare. Nothing really. I can hardly remember it now. Probably just stress. Just need to sleep. Be to bed in a few."

Shutting the door, Chris turned to the mirror. He looked closely into the reflection of his own eyes to see what else
his mind might hold. Seeing nothing, he finished in the bathroom, and went to join his wife in bed, hoping for a peaceful night's sleep.

3:31 am

He's standing in the woods, looking at his father. His dad seems to be telling him something, but he can't hear the words, he's too far away. Before he can get close enough to understand what his father is saying, a shot rings out, echoing for what seems to be an eternity. He watches his father fall in slow motion. He tries to run to his father, but his feet feel like they are encased in cement. Then his mother enters into the scene, screaming, hands wanting to cover her face, yet she can't tear her eyes away from her husband. Finally looking away from the terrible sight of her dead husband, she finds her son standing by the outhouse. She stares at the gun in his hand. Chris's eyes follow her line of sight until they rest on the smoking gun he is still holding out in front of him.

Chris awoke, shaking, repeating the words, "It was an accident." He could still vividly see the scene it front of him; still felt as if he was in the nightmare. It wasn't until his wife turned to him and put her arm around him that he realized he was lying in his own bed. Suddenly tears were released in a torrent as the truth emerged from the recesses of his mind. Between sobs, he told his wife the real story.
"It was Mom's idea to make up the ex-con . . . filled in the details using a police report we heard on the radio."

"What ex-con?"

"The one I told you killed Dad . . . in the woods . . . it was me with the gun, I shot him."

"Sh, honey. There now, everything will be fine."

Unfortunately, Chris did not find comfort in these words he had heard so long ago from his mother. But, after telling the story, he felt like a great weight had been lifted from him. As his wife rocked him in her arms, he caught a glimpse of his reflection in the full length mirror next to the bed. The face he saw was the young boy, smiling and crying at the same time. This vision faded into his own face and he knew that the nightmare would never return.