

Fray

Category: Sleep

written by Joe Amaral | February 3, 2018

Driving the ambulance in crushing fatigue, my weighted eyelids slit to make sodium glows of street lamps into arcing orange, bobbing like stars that penetrate unfired darkness. Sainly portals to dawn.

My fingers clench the steering wheel as cold air audibly snaps, a feeling like muscles and tendons stretching past their limits: bones and their deep-soaked driftwood tumbling home. Sunrays barbwire my veins, lancing the way large gauge needles brand bodies with memories of electrical impulse and beat.

We all want somebody to come save us from our mistakes and maladies. Embarrassment smolders like panicked breath. Heroes don't arrive in capes but half-awake, sporting drab jumpsuits and poor layman speech.

Medical jargon boomerangs between patient and paramedic. Medications, history, signs, symptoms, allergies. Personal questions and uncomfortable probing. Fumbling like a first date. A meeting remembered as both brief and impactful.

I park at the station and wander in diurnal confusion. Sleep will be disjointed yet bendable, a tender rebound to defuse what is absorbed. Then do it all over again when dusk slams the pedal toward scenes of blood, burnt rubber and lifesaving struggle.

Joe Amaral

Arroyo Grande, California