

Sample chapter from

Dreams
of
Seventeen

by Benjamin Gayle

Dreams of Seventeen

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0. Preface

This book is a collection of dreams that I recorded during the year of 2017. As in my previous book of dreams, *Dreams of Sixteen*, the entries in *this* book are arranged in sequence by month and date.

I define *dream* as that which I experience in the state of sleeping consciousness: I go to bed, fall asleep (I hope), and dream (often). What I write down is whatever I can remember when I wake, whatever I can drag back across to waking consciousness. These are *not* stories that I have purposefully created – I dreamed all of it. Each entry is my objective attempt to describe what I experienced in the dream, and no more. The entries have been minimally edited for readability.

1. January

10 January

Unpacking and setting up musical gear on a stage. I am following someone else who knows the other people and is in charge of things. The stage is a long rectangular building with open walls and rooms for each performer. *Blue-eight* and *blue-nine* are locations where gear must be set up. As we are working, musicians are already playing. The performances are complementary – performers on either end of the stage interact in a musical conversation, an improvisation. I don't think the real show has started yet because I don't see an audience. This must be practice.

12 January

Flying a solar-powered glider via remote control. There are others here working on and operating various flying machines. The solar panels provide the energy to create an electro-static charge difference between the wings and the air. I don't understand how that makes it fly, all I have to do is guide it. Once I have mastered the remote piloting, I graduate to a full-sized plane. This model has photo-voltaic cells on the upper surfaces, a white body, and wide wings with up-curved tips. Some-

one else says I am not ready for it yet, but doesn't stop me. I hold onto the wings from below, using body motions to control the flight. I am careful to go slow and stay close to the ground while I learn to control it.

15 *January*

Conversing with an old acquaintance. I won a phonograph cartridge recently, so we talk about phonographs, turntables, and old records. I have some old records, and now a phonograph cartridge, but no turntable. He says good turntables are expensive but worth it for their sound reproduction quality when playing those sixty-plus-year-old records. We also talk about replacement loudspeakers for refurbishing the old speaker cabinets. I tell him about some reproduction speakers made to the correct physical size that claim to be high-quality for music reproduction. I saw them at the place where I had purchased amplifier replacement parts.

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Participating in a strange charity event. Someone else has organised it. People line up to donate money – coins and bills – by dumping them into a jar on a table under an open tent. I'm not sure where we are, but the lawn is green. I have to stand behind the table with the jar and thank each donor personally, verbally, though some of them don't even acknowledge my presence. I am doubting that this is worth the embarrassment of appearing to beg from these people. Will they have any left to give to others in need?

16 *January*

Visiting an educational institution. They have been making chips for me on an experimental basis. I need to build some circuits with these chips, so I need the chips and tools to apply them. I wander through, looking for someone to help me. I walk down corridors past doors to rooms. Deeper inside the building, I find an open area with tall vertical racks of equipment. Some of it is for computing and networking, and some sections are metallic monoliths with various protrusions and what look like controls – I think those are the chip-making machines. The few people I see in this section ignore me. Past these machines is a raised platform with a railing and more equipment that I don't recognise. The people working there scatter when I climb up onto the platform. Looking around, I see a table in the center, in the middle of things, with what looks like a partly-eaten bird carcass.

A woman approaches me and offers to help. She seems to know who I am and why I am here. She leads me back through the arrays of machines, telling me about them as we go. Back in one of the corridors, we come to a door to a laboratory. She tells me its name, something I don't understand. We go through the laboratory, past open tables with people manipulating things, some look like circuit boards, to a door. She says this is the office of the professor I need to talk to, but I don't recognise his name. He is talking to a student who appears to be a child. We wait politely for them to finish their conversation.

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Analysing a supplier's manufacturing production processes. We need to understand why they cannot meet our needs for volume and quality. An internal discussion brings up the topic of one of our competitors: they had gone out of business because they could not source enough and good enough quality components to meet the expectations and demands of their customers. What will we do to avoid that same end? In a production room, we look over rows of tables where parts with their packaging are laid out to be inspected before being re-packed or rejected.

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Tracing cables to an overhead fixture. Something is not working as expected. I have to get maintenance to go up a ladder to check it out. He suspects that another fixture nearby has problems; he wants to check that also. This area has an array of large rectangular machines that we have to work around to reach what we need.

17 *January*

Defending the house against a squirrel. It is aggressively testing all of the defenses, looking for holes it can get through. Why? I think through scenarios without finding a satisfying answer. I wonder what would happen if I let it into the house and trapped it there.

20 *January*

Visiting a place that seems to be the home-base for

a baseball team. I am in a small courtyard surrounded by low structures. An array of folding chairs is set up in the grass. They appear to have been positioned carefully, but I don't understand the significance or purpose in the pattern. A group of fans has shown up for an event; they sit and wait for the baseball players. When the players arrive, they greet the fans and sit among them. I am standing aside, practising my pitch and swing while observing the event. One of the players comes over and asks if I had played before. Yes, a minor league farm team, but I didn't make it very far. There is conversation, some casual, some specifically directed for this event.

After the event is over, People get up and disperse and the setup changes. The courtyard gets larger, enough to hold the baseball field, and there are many more seats. I sit down as more people arrive. There are not enough seats, so some stand while others sit on laps. In the commotion of people arriving and sitting, I nearly miss the team introductions. An announcer calls each player by name as they file out onto the field and stand in formation before disappearing into the dugouts. I know the game started, but I don't remember how it went.

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Explaining something about radio communications. He doesn't understand radio; he just wants to communicate and his hand-held unit is insufficient. I try to explain the concept of a repeater: a more powerful base station with a fixed antenna that the hand-held will connect to and through. He could install it at his house. He is either not paying attention to what I am saying or he doesn't understand. Is the concept really that difficult?

22 *January*

Talking to someone while trimming my beard. He uses a different type of trimmer and wants to know how mine works, so I tell him. This conversation is distracting me from finishing the trim job. We are at an outdoor gathering, a cookout in a parking lot. There are tents and vehicles, people eating and talking. Some people are flying around on boards; one of them looks like a surf-board, another looks like a go-kart. They are flying low and dangerously close to the tents and people. One of them makes a mistake and gets stuck in a tent. I notice someone else here that I have been avoiding because I don't want to talk to her. I hope she doesn't see me here.

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Wandering through an apartment that keeps getting larger the more I look. I start out in a room that might have been a kitchen. Everything is in yellows except some grease-stained green plastic flooring that is raised one step above the rest of the floor, like a stage for cooking. Hallways and rooms are empty and neglected. Continuing through, I reach a wide stairway that leads to a public area. Looking back, I see that I had come through an opening roughly cut in a wall. This isn't part of the apartment, so maybe it is not as large as it seemed. I go back through the hole and look more closely at the walls. There are outlines of doors and windows that have been sealed over. I wonder what is on the other side.

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Going down a stairway of micro-steps. It is practi-

cally a ramp for our feet. The two of us pull out what look like skateboards with gear-wheels that mesh with the steps, and ride them down to the bottom. The skateboards self-align with a step at the bottom, click into place, and cause a stairway of larger steps, perpendicular to the micro-stairway, to transform itself into a larger transport mechanism. I think this is how we get to the trade show. This stairway is relatively dark at the top and much brighter down below. Streaks of color – green, cream, and gray – run down the steps in bands as if they are made of plastic.

23 January

Cleaning up piles of white candle wax. I have to clear it all away before continuing. I can't figure out how to remove it – it is stuck as molten mounds fused together and to the floors.

24 January

Driving to somewhere for vacation. I am supposed to meet her there. I realise, as I drive into the parking lot, that I have forgotten my key to the place. She is not here yet, so I park across the white lines that mark the parking spaces and wait to see where she will park when she arrives. There are only two other cars here in the twenty or more spaces. I am so distracted by my upset at forgetting the key that I do not immediately notice the animal just outside, looking at me through the driver-side window. At first, I think it is a deer because they

are common here. As I look back at it, it resolves to be a large monkey. This spooks me, this thing out there staring at me. I start the car and begin to pull away. The monkey moves off across the parking lot, looking back at the car as it goes.

26 January

Competing in a bicycle race. I have to take a break before my last lap. As I am putting my shoes back on, I realise that the clock is still running. Why did I take my shoes off, so close to finishing? I hurry to get ready to go again, to get back onto the course and finish. It is a loop, a track on outdoor roads and marked off with barricades. Everyone else has finished and I am held up, impeded from reaching the finishing line because racers and spectators and media have crowded onto the course. Twenty-six minutes – I think that was how long it took me to reach the finish line.

27 January

Walking into what looks like a classroom. IT has noticed an unusual volume of network traffic. They have pulled the plug on the connection to the outside, shutting down the up-link, and sent me to investigate. I go down the rows of desks, looking at the blinking devices that sit on top of them, and avoid eye contact with their occupants. The devices are cycling: connect, overload with processing and data connections saturated, enter self-protect mode by dropping off the network and pow-

ering down, then re-start again. A red ovoid larger than a football is in a closet at the back of the room – it has something to do with the network. I think I have to shut it down to stop the cycling of the devices.

28 *January*

Hiding in a junky garbage truck. Inside, it has wooden ribs and planks that form multiple levels. I watch it being loaded, track what is there, and pick out things to take. As I am making off with the trash, the owner of the truck notices and begins to chase. Up and over and back down muddy paths we go, between crudely-made wooden structures, a primitive town. I hide with the items in a small shack, closing and bolting the door and shutters. The structure around me is flimsy and insubstantial; I can even see through cracks in the walls to outside. This doesn't feel like a safe place to hide.

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Going into a building. I enter a lobby that is separated from the interior of the building by glass walls and doors trimmed in dull silver metal. Open storage cubicles line the walls. I have put my books and notebooks in one of the cubicles, to the left of the doors and on the bottom row. My things look out-of-place among the contents of the other cubicles: crayons and markers and toys. I feel as if I shouldn't be here, I don't belong. A woman comes through the door from inside the building. She asks if I am ready now, ready to commit to whatever this is, the reason that I came here today. I sense that she is impatient, has been waiting for me, and this opportunity will go away if I don't follow her now. I say

eighty percent, not sure what I mean by that, not knowing if that is enough to keep the door open for whatever this is. I look over at the cubicles and they are now all behind glass, inaccessible.

29 *January*

Sitting on the toilet in the bathroom. It is early morning. I hear an unfamiliar voice, a woman calling – someone else is in the house. When I am finished in the bathroom, I go out to the kitchen. The woman has set her things down there, unpacked, and is ready to discuss my car problems. I had contacted someone about replacing the clutch, but had not expected anyone to visit like this. I must have left the back door open last night for her to have gotten in; I don't remember. She quotes some statistics on cars of this model.

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Making a statement in front of a large crowd. I don't know what the overall purpose is, but it feels like a political protest. As part of my statement, I pledge to participate in a foot race that is somehow symbolic of something that this crowd is interested in. Everyone cheers at the mention of the race.

The race itself started yesterday and continued through the night. It is now mid-morning and I am nearing the finish. Signs posted along the route mark off the remaining distance. Two people are still ahead of me. I pass the closer one easily, but hold back and match speed with the other. I am tired and need to conserve energy for the finish, to pace myself so I don't collapse before the end.

The path of the course follows roads and streets, sidewalks, and goes through buildings. I see one particularly narrow doorway up ahead and resolve to pass the person in front of me before then. This might be my last opportunity before the course becomes too technical. I make the pass and carefully squeeze through the doorway, twisting my body sideways to fit through. Inside the building, the course is marked by crimson velvet ropes hooked to brass posts, then up stairs, then back out onto a road.

Slight downhill to a bridge, and up again and around to the left I continue to run. Trees hang over the road from the left. To the right is the place I made my speech – another crowd is gathered there. They have covered the road here with green carpet. It is not secured, so it slips and bunches up as I run over it. I am still thinking of the person behind me, measuring my effort to maintain my lead.

The speaker on-stage to the right interrupts her speech to acknowledge that I am passing by, almost finished with the race. The crowd looks and cheers, and I throw my hands up to acknowledge them. I realise that I am cold in this flimsy sleeveless racing jersey. The finish line is beyond a right-turn onto a gravel road, I'm not sure how far. I hope I reach it soon. I continue on down a hill and up another; maybe it is just on the other side.

About the Author

Benjamin Gayle was born in Richmond Virginia, and has lived in the western mountains of the state for most of his life. Educated in math and electrical engineering, he has worked in a wide variety of capacities including factory automation in automotive manufacturing, and designing motor control systems for a drives manufacturer. He has been an amateur cyclist and bicycle mechanic for more than thirty years, and an amateur radio operator (N1NP) for nearly twenty. Reading was an early passion, followed by writing in his early teens, though that was set aside for decades for career and other responsibilities. He currently works a part-time job while continuing to write.

He has also produced *Spectrum*, a broad overview of the music of composer Charles Irving Gayle, available on CD.

Sample chapters and more information are available at www.AntonomasiaProductions.org.

Books by Benjamin Gayle:

The Turtle Test
The Frost Bug Dreams
Dreams of Sixteen
Dreams of Seventeen
Dreams of Eighteen