

Sample chapter from

Dreams
of
Nineteen

by Benjamin Gayle

Dreams of Nineteen

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0. Preface

This book is a collection of dreams that I recorded during the year of 2019. As in my previous books of dreams, 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**

01 January

Coming home in the morning. It is just getting light and everything is wet. As I approach the house, I see the two lawnmowers sitting in the yard near the sidewalk. They should not be out there; they should be in the barn. When I push them to the barn, I find two bicycles leaned up against it. They shouldn't be out here either. I put the lawnmowers away first, then move the bicycles. One of them has begun to rust from being wet and both have flat tires. I check the bicycle that is still in the barn – its tires are also flat. I rotate the rear wheel to look for damage and find a cut in the middle of the tread, then two places where the bead has been cut through, and a long slash down the side. I will have to replace the tires. Worse, I will have to tell her that the bicycles were vandalised. She will insist on calling the police. I don't want to have to deal with that.

. . .

Wandering around in the yard. A neighbor comes out of her house and calls to another neighbor. They meet under the same tree that I am standing under. The woman asks the other neighbor if he has a nut-cracker, holding out a bowl of nuts still in their shells. He goes back to his house and returns with a pair of pliers – good enough. She uses the pliers to crack open a nut

and they share it, then she gives one to me. I manage to open it with the pliers, squeezing in just the right places to make the shell pop open in two neat pieces. I follow the woman back to her house and in, where I eat more nuts and handfuls of cereal from an open box. She asks about the wooden trim pieces that I had removed for her when she was re-decorating – do I still have them? Yes, they are stacked up in the garage. She says I should sell them because they are popular now and worth at least sixty dollars each. I ask if she wants them back but she says no. I close the cereal box and head for the door. She calls after me and hands me a small plastic tub with cookie crumbs in it.

02 *January*

Waiting for a concert to begin. The singer waits in the living room for the performance to start. I make the introduction. When the singer steps up, the crowd screams and cheers from down the block and moves this way. I think I might have to close the front door, but the singer has already left, fleeing from the crowd of fans. I have to go to the other end of the house and ask my sister to watch the house while I go to look for her.

. . .

Waiting inside a shopping mall. I am supposed to meet someone here to exchange documents. Before my contact arrives, I notice cards and papers on the floor. I pick some up and find my own ID and credit card among them. I have to collect them all and sort through them, then report to my insurance agent. A police officer

approaches and asks what I am doing. I explain that I have been scammed and am collecting evidence. As I pick up the last of the pieces, I see two other people meeting to exchange documents.

. . .

Attending a music show. A rusty sign has the concert information. It is years out-of-date, but she assures me that it is correct. We wait for the bands to set up, then record them, eight tracks each. I have to take the recordings and make CDs, filling the empty space with recordings of ambient noise.

. . .

Driving through a restaurant. There are two lanes. My lane is empty except for me, but the other lane is backed up. The lane is too narrow and the car barely fits inside the building. When I get to the counter, the cashier asks what I want. I don't know and don't see a menu. He suggests starting with a drink, so I order a regular soda. He turns to fill a cup but the machine isn't working.

04 January

Cleaning the carpet. I am sitting in the recliner, busy writing in a notebook, when she asks me to come out to the living room and help clean the carpet. I follow her but have questions. I want to make sure that I understand what she expects me to do. She interprets my questions as a reluctance to participate. I ask again. Will

I be cleaning the carpet with a scrub-brush or is there a carpet-cleaning machine? *No*, she says, *vacuum* pointing to an old cylinder connected to a hose. She is also vacuuming in the same room with a different machine so I don't know why I have to do this, but start anyway. As I go, the carpet varies from deep pile to low berber to bare wood floor. The debris also varies, from bits of dust to foam packing peanuts. The vacuum sucks some of them up, but blows others away. I have to approach from various angles of attack to get them all.

06 *January*

Sitting in the sand under a wooden shelter. A small box on a table next to me holds worn copies of a bird field guide. They have cloth covers in light green, light blue, and red, marked '1979, printed in 1984'. The typeface of the print varies. They all have names, either on the cover or on the title page, some hand-written, others rubber-stamped. Some are marked with the name of a school.

07 *January*

Walking through a park. I see wide-open fields and flat spaces with little equipment. Some people play baseball on reddish dirt. At the far end of the park, I find a rusty jungle-gym and a wooden bench. It is greener here. Walking back through, I throw a baseball ahead of me and follow it across the dirt. Others are playing together, but I am alone here.

. . .

Looking for work. There is no production work to be done. In desperation, I start cleaning. On a shelf behind some seldom-used test equipment, I find a large circuit board with many smaller circuit boards soldered to it in layers – an engineering experiment.

. . .

Installing new exhaust on the old pickup truck. When I climb underneath to check, the exhaust pipe and muffler are missing. I have to replace them and cut pieces of water pipe support strap to hold them in place. It is much quieter now.

08 January

Seeing the same junky red vehicle in the parking lot, on the lawn, and in the woods. I think it is abandoned, but then I see it moving, driven by various people. Then I realise that I am seeing three different vehicles in various states of disrepair, damage, and decay, all with rust and dents and broken glass. The one parked on the lawn near the building entrance looks as if someone was throwing rocks at it. Seeing it moving reminds me that I need to clean out my own vehicle. I pack things into a plastic bag: clothes, feathers that I had to peel off of the windshield, candy canes, cable ties, and anything else I think I won't need soon. I will put them in storage for now, but wonder if I will ever use any of it.

11 *January*

Walking on a sidewalk along the left side of the street. A woman walks toward me carrying five white boxes and small cartons of milk; looks like meals-to-go. She hands them to me as she passes, without explaining. I don't know what to do with them. I carry them up steps to the left and into a building, then set my load down on a shelf next to a narrow cubicle and sit down at a computer terminal. I think I work here. The cubicle walls and desk are dark brown. I am checking something on the computer when an unfamiliar woman shows up and asks *are you going to deliver those?* pointing at the boxes on the shelf. I don't know. She takes over at the computer terminal while I check the cables underneath the desk. I have to add some cable ties to make them neater. When I am finished, the woman asks me where she can get some food. I point and say *around the corner to the right.* I know there is a food counter there, though now it doesn't seem to make any sense to me. She asks if it is a convenience store. No, I think it is a restaurant. She disappears around the corner then returns a few minutes later. Again, she points to the boxes on the shelf and asks *are you going to deliver those?* I still don't know.

12 *January*

Walking through a department store, looking for a restroom. I weave through displays of merchandise near the checkout at the front of the store. I see the sign at the left-front corner, past the checkout and more shelves

of merchandise. On my way there, the sheriff stops me. A deputy is with him; both are in full uniform. He starts telling me about his weight-loss ordeal – fifty-eight pounds and still going. He is still large enough that I think he could lose another fifty-eight pounds, but I don't say that. I don't know why he is telling *me* this. After a few minutes of monologue and long pauses, they move on, allowing me to resume my journey to the restroom. When I reach the door, where I can see in to the urinal on the wall, a small boy darts past me into the restroom and closes the door behind him. Okay, at least I have found the restroom and I am next-in-line to use it.

. . .

Finding another cat at the front door. It ran into the house when I came home. Now it sits at the door as if it wants to go back out. When I open the door, it just sits there looking out, then looking up at me. I squat down to reach it, to give it a quick back-scratch, then stand back up. The cat climbs up the door frame and mews, looking at me. I scratch its head before it slips back down. Eventually the cat goes out.

. . .

Walking along a moving roadway. It looks more like a conveyor belt than a road. As we travel, she jumps off of the road to catch rabbits and set them on the road in a line. *For later*, she says. The road will apparently deliver them to us tomorrow. When we go back to the road to collect the rabbits, I hesitate. They look the same as yesterday, but now I am not sure they are rabbits, gray fur with white underbelly and a large

bushy tail. When I pick one up, it claws and bites me. Now that I have a rabbit, I don't know what to do with it.

14 *January*

Pushing a desk up a ramp. Near the top, I am tired and sweating and my feet are slipping on the smooth surface. Someone helps to pull me up the last bit. Then I climb down from the ramp, down a bookshelf, onto a sofa, then down onto the floor. A small monkey on the sofa takes my headphones and chews on them, ruining them.

. . .

Watching a car chase. A man drives while a woman sits in a plastic swivel chair in the passenger-side floorboard. The chair rolls from side-to-side in the turns. Another car pulls up alongside them. There is shouting through the windows, and bullets and laser blasters, but the target is not clear. The attackers apologise for the inconvenience and move on.

15 *January*

Setting up to write outdoors. I am on the patio, arranging small black plastic pieces on a table. They keep rolling off onto the floor, then into the grass. I don't know why I need all of these parts to write and worry that I will lose all of them before I can start work. The sky is overcast and threatens to rain on my setup.

The neighbors have set up a wall of speakers in front of their small red house and turned up the volume. Brown wooden cabinets with golden grill cloth scream at the street. The red wooden fence that separates the speakers from my patio doesn't do much to block the noise. I am considering setting up my own speakers, pointed in their direction, to cancel the noise, but I don't think that will be enough.

17 January

Trying to find a seat at a large gathering. I walk down a slope of smooth concrete, through irregular groupings of benches and chairs and school desks. All of the seats that I pass are full. Some seats just beyond look empty, but are occupied when I get there. I make a counter-clockwise loop through the crowd and eventually find a desk to sit in. I don't know why we are all here.

. . .

Changing duties at work. I am looking through the shelves of work to be done, but don't see anything familiar. A man approaches me with a chalkboard and a list. I have seen him before, but don't remember his name. He starts writing on the chalkboard, which is labeled with a grid, and talking to me, telling me this is the priority list for production. I try to follow him, writing the model numbers and quantities in my notebook, but the list is too long. When he is finished with the list, I point to the first item and ask where those are; I don't see them anywhere on the shelves. He says I have to assemble them first. I have never done that before, I have only

tested and repaired completed products. He doesn't seem to understand my situation. I don't know the assembly process, even where to get the parts, so I need someone to show me, to train me. The man disappears with the chalkboard without helping. I look on the shelves again and find some formed metal pieces that are marked with the first model number on my list, boxes that hold most of the parts and mount in a rack.

I have to find the supervisor and ask her what to do, but people keep interrupting me, asking questions about *their* work. They are having similar problems, new tasks with no training. I give up looking for the supervisor and go back to the shelf where the boxes are stacked. Now there is a box of papers and stick-on labels next to them. The papers have order numbers and model numbers that match my list, but no instructions. I can't read the labels. I consider taking all of it to my workbench, but resume looking for the supervisor instead.

Out of my work area, crowded with confused people, and through other departments I walk. All of these spaces are too crowded with shelves and racks and workbenches and people. I go through a doorway into a corridor with glass walls; it is much quieter here. I come to a wide T-intersection where the glass walls end, then left and through a doorway. It looks like a waiting area for something, furnished with carpet and glass tables. Children who all look alike sit at tables and benches, filling all of the seats. I wonder if this is the Human Resources office. That might help me, but it would be a long wait and there is no place to sit except on the floor, so I move on.

The corridor turns into a shopping mall, a balcony with small shops overlooking a lower level of shops. After another turn, I am in a narrow corridor with shops on the right side and brown block wall on the left. I pass a toy store, then an electronics shop just before the corridor opens up to a hanging gardens with many plants and narrow walkways. I can see down through floor grates to the level below.

Here I meet a man from a different department followed by two others. They want to know what is going on. I don't know, so I recount my experience of the day and tell them that I am trying to find the supervisor to get direction and instruction. They tell me that is what they are doing also. We walk back to the production area together, through the garden and into another corridor. Here is the programming office. That looks important, so I write down its location in my notebook. I know some parts have to be programmed; I might have to come back here later.

. . .

Shifting time. I go back-and-forth through a gate with my sister. In the future, we find that there is no electricity, and myriad other problems and hardship as a result. We have to go back through the gate to the past to fix things. I'm not sure what we did, but the electricity is back on. Going home, our last trip through the gate, my sister stashes some things above the doorway, safe-keeping for later. I follow her example and hang my wallet on a wire where it can't be seen from the other side. I might need to come back for it later.

. . .

Playing a tune at a competition. She has a flute and a piccolo. I have something else: the back is a thin piece of wood the size and shape of a dinner plate; strings stretched across the frame make the sound. She improvises an accompaniment on the piccolo as I strum and bow. I didn't get to hear the other competitors' tunes.

18 January

Walking through a run-down business area. An unfamiliar woman is leading us to her employment agency. I look at the store-fronts as we go; each has a different style. Most have doors and windows, some are all glass, but I stop at one that has neither door nor windows. It has a bulletin board and two tall racks holding cards with names on them. The woman says that is not her employment agency. Time cards, then, I suppose, and here is a slot to deposit them. I have not seen any people in any of the shops. We arrive at the employment agency and go in. The three of us barely fit into the tiny space. Nobody else is here and I don't see a door to a back room so I don't understand how this agency works. I had expected to find someone to help me. She is also disappointed but we stay long enough to look at the postings on the wall.

20 January

Coming home after a long absence. The house

looks long-abandoned. For some reason, I think I need to stay here. Outside, I can see through the cracks in the stucco to the wood underneath. Inside is a single room with no furnishings except curtains over the windows in blue flowery prints. The curtains billow in the breeze as air leaks through the old windows. I pull one aside to examine a window, thinking I might be able to seal them better. The glass panes rattle in their wooden frames. The sills are full of rocks. One of the storm windows is out of its sliding track so I try to put it back.

As I handle the metal-framed glass pane, I see writing, a message scratched into the glass. It is too faint and uneven for me to read all of it, but it is a message from Kimi saying that [unreadable] has been taken and needs help. I wonder how long ago that was and if it refers to someone I knew. They were both older than me. I forget the windows momentarily while scanning through memories of simpler and less-burdensome times, when my only concern was to behave and stay in the good graces of the next-door neighbor. I can see the wooden fence and gate that surrounded her house and yard, and the dirt road that passed near and disappeared into the trees beyond.

24 January

Standing in line. I am second behind a young man. He is at the counter, talking to a woman in a white uniform, asking her questions about the differences in available medications. He wants to stock-up, so they have to be durable, to stay effective over a long storage period. He says complicated names and she looks them up at a

computer terminal. Then she presents him with two options, pointing to display boxes behind the counter. There isn't much of either medicine left and he is indecisive, just keeps asking questions as if to postpone the decision.

. . .

Putting coins into a slot on a washing machine at the laundromat. This is my last load and I am almost out of quarters. The machine rejects one coin but accepts it the second time I put it in. The next-to-last coin causes sparks to shoot out of the coin slot. I also push the last coin in before noticing that the control panel on the machine has gone dark – dead. I go to the laundromat office to ask for a refund so I can use another machine, but nobody is there. I don't know what to do but haul the dirty clothes back home and try again another day.

. . .

Staying at a hotel. I am on a road trip with my sister and her. I come out of my room in the morning and head for the bathroom. On my way, I pass the front desk. The hotel manager is there, talking about a promotion. He has plastic tubs stacked up everywhere, clear with multi-colored lids, like what we store leftovers in. It is a contest – guess the number of the winning toilet stall, as numbered in the hotel bathroom, write the number on the lid of the tub, and win that tub full of dirt. I don't understand the point of that, but take a tub from him and go into the bathroom. Toilet stalls line two walls, with showers along the other two walls and benches and shelves in the middle. I count the stalls –

thirteen. I write '13' on the container lid and the container itself, several times to be sure, and take it back out to the hotel manager. Another guest is carrying arms-full of containers to enter into the contest.

I go out to the parking lot to see if they are ready to go. No, they are still asleep in the car. I go back into the hotel, wondering if I checked out already, if it is too late to take a shower. I also need to get dressed, as I have been walking around naked. At my room, I expect the door to be locked but it opens with a push. My suitcase is still here, so I get some clothes out and put them on. I go back to the hotel lobby, passing workers carrying floor tiles into an unfinished room that they are remodeling.

Out in the parking lot, they are still asleep in the car. It has rained, and a lot. The road is flooded in places. I watch as a van makes a right turn out of the parking lot and through a deep puddle. In the other direction, cars move along submerged up to their roofs. I hope the water recedes before we have to leave.

. . .

Going out to eat. I am surprised when she says it is time to leave. I still have to change my clothes because I don't want to go out in my pajamas. First, I have to choose what to wear. That is not difficult because there is only one pair of pants and three T-shirts, one black and two orange, all dirty. I choose the black shirt. When I am ready to go, I have to corral a small calico cat because it needs to eat also. Everyone else has gone out to wait in the car. When I have the

cat ready, we go out the back door but the car is not there – they have left without us. I go back in, resigned to finding some cat food for the cat. It doesn't understand and protests being herded around.

25 *January*

Traveling to a customer site. My sister and I prepare to leave to install some new product. We get into a helicopter and go through a checklist. I plug a small gray box into the radio circuit, an adapter for scanning all of the frequencies on this band. When the checklist is done and we are ready to lift-off, she turns to me and tells me to stay put and be quiet. She is tense. When I protest, she raises her voice. That is unusual for my sister. She guides the helicopter up into the dark. Soon she is panicked because someone is following us. I don't understand. This isn't a secret mission and I say so. She tells me to shut up and says the helicopter behind us probably has missiles – we have to evade it. We fly low, through and around obstacles, then into a road tunnel where we almost hit a car.

. . .

Installing telephone equipment at someone else's house. Three copper cables hang down from the ceiling. I have to install jacks and telephones. I ask the residents, an older couple, what they want and where they want the phones installed. The man indicates three locations: on the wall inside the front door, on the wall in an interior hallway, and on a table on the back porch, all close to where the cables are. The woman tells me that she

wants to pay five dollars for the phones, and three would be better. I'm not sure I can get anything, certainly nothing made by my company, for that price. I might have to give them an extra-deep discount to make sure they get quality phones. I would ask if they want fiber-optic lines instead of copper, but their manner and apparent budget tell me that they won't. I leave the house to go requisition the parts to get the job done.

. . .

Visiting someone's house to pick up a device. I park my pickup truck on the street below the apartment building and walk up a sidewalk past two levels of parking lot to the building itself, where I climb an outdoor stairway to the second floor. Here is an open balcony with fake grass carpet.

Two people are waiting for me. The woman is vaguely familiar; she might be a relative. The man is a representative for the company that makes the device that I am picking up. It is in a cardboard box on a table, a small black metal box with a cable attached at one end. I'm not sure what it is, but I think it is related to radio. There is no demonstration, no instructions, only the expectation that I will follow them to where it needs to be installed, a two-hour drive north of here. I hope they let me ride with them because I don't want to drive that far.

I go to use the bathroom before we leave, walking across more fake grass carpet on the way. When I am finished in the bathroom, I find that they have already left the apartment and I see their car rolling out of the

parking lot below. I take the box with the device and walk back to my pickup, then head for the highway, hoping that I remember how to get there. On the way, I think about how to make a radio the size of the connector on the cable that is attached to the device.

. . .

Testing drives and motors for a customer. I have two drives on the workbench, different models with the same ratings. One functions correctly, but the other will not power-on. An unfamiliar woman is here complaining about the broken drive, saying that it was already repaired once and now here it is again. Then she starts complaining about a couple who work for the company, claiming that their house is full of company merchandise. I don't know them and don't comment on that.

. . .

Trying to get out of prison. We are on an island in a channel with cold water and swift currents. If we make it to shore or a civilian boat, then we are free. I watch as others jump into the water only to be picked up by guards in boats and returned to the island. One man times his jump with the fast approach of a small boat. The driver reaches out an arm and helps the man out of the water just before the guards reach them – *safe*. I watch and wait for another fast approach, timing my jump the same. My attempt fails, but I have another opportunity – build my way out. I have to collect the small parts to assemble devices that I can trade for my freedom. I eventually make it and take my collection of parts with me when I go.

. . .

Copying CDs. I have to sneak through a field and past an electric fence to get to the building where the equipment is located. The fence is particularly difficult. It is only chest-high but has coils of razor-wire strung above and through. A pair of fiberglass ladders gets me over safely, but I worry that someone will notice them before I return so I hide them in some bushes before going inside. The CD copying equipment is not working properly. Sometimes it will not write to the disc. Other times it writes the wrong information.

. . .

Repairing the network in a remote village. I spend most of the time in one house, pulling and terminating cables, and installing and configuring equipment. A box at the front door has too many cables attached. I trace one out to the front porch where it connects to an illegal tap. I unplug that and take it inside with the cable. That upsets the coyotes. They attack and take my notebook. It will be difficult for me to finish this job without my notes on the network connections.

27 January

Attending a concert. We sit in rows on metal folding chairs with the performers. I sit behind a trombone player who seems to be out-of-sync with the rest of the group on a dixieland tune. I clap when they finish, but that doesn't seem adequate or appropriate.

28 *January*

Clearing transports from the manufacturing area. They look like large armored caterpillars in silver and black. They seem to be hostile and are blocking my path.

While I am dodging the machines, trying to figure out how to get around them, a woman shows up with weapons. She is wearing armor in silver and black that looks like the transports. She raises a weapon, touches the end of the barrel to a transport, and fires at point-blank range. The transport is not damaged. I wonder if she knows how to use her weapon properly. Apparently so, because she rotates the barrel and fires again. This time, light and sparks come out and the transport stops. Then she runs off to chase another transport, leaving this one blocking the path.

I check it carefully for hostiles, then climb over it and head for the storage area to get supplies. I find a gun like the one the woman had, a silver rectangular metal piece that I think might be a gun, and a small laser. I need to move the disabled transport and think I just need to find the keys, so I set out to search for them, carrying the three weapons.

Elsewhere in the storage area, I think I see a new brand of rice on a shelf. It turns out to be rice paper. Then I notice a variety of different rice papers: wall paper, writing paper, and toilet paper.

. . .

Working as a cashier at a fast-food restaurant. My register comes up one dollar short, so I have to sign a

form acknowledging the issue. I am confused because it has other amounts and signatures on it.

31 January

Attending a festival. I have to leave early to go to work, but intend to return at the end of the day for the prize drawing. Musicians and singers sign autographs. I don't recognise them and haven't heard them play, but they seem to have many fans. In mid-afternoon, I am at work at a machine with a lever that I have to pull repeatedly. A co-worker tells me that we will have to leave early because there is not enough work.

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.

Other books by Benjamin Gayle:

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