

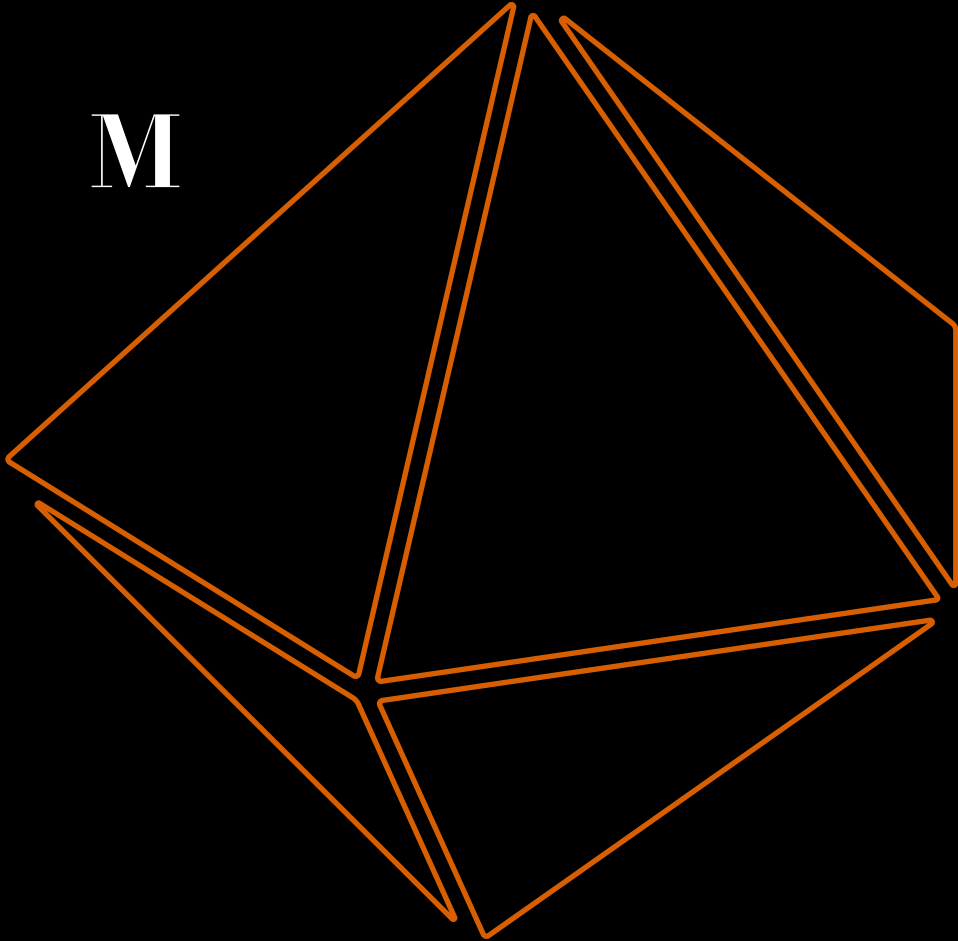
T

R

A

U

M



(A)

by dev

TRAUM:

noun (german)

1. dream

TRAUMA:

noun (greek), τραύμα

1. wound

this collection of poems was inspired by the close visual appearance of the words 'traum' and 'trauma.' they don't share a linguistic history as far as I can tell, but the connection made me reflective on how many of my own disorienting and upsetting and memorable experiences in life have taken place at the edge of sleep, or have woken me up from it and blurred the lines of my dream world and the frightening reality of the awakened world. these poems are surreal explorations of how that has manifested in my life in deeply personal ways. they contain upsetting content.

more visual art / sporadic poetry: [flesh.direct](#)

zine font: didot

title image: from the twilight zone magazine (1981), via [archive.org](#)

woke from a dream

by my mom's voice, crying

“please call 911 mama just call 911 go ahead I'll be right there ”

my grandpa's dream was an epic

in a hospital room, big enough on the inside to hold

his brothers, his sisters, his parents,

and a farm, all in 1942

so I hope it was a restful one,

a respite from so many nights of losing his own

between jobs, between the farm, arriving at rest

for an hour or two or three, maximum

to hold the dreams of the rest of us

he never complained, but I wish he had

and I hope he wouldn't cry to know

that one day my dreamscape would be even smaller

in the inside of my car, in the backseat, like a casket

the smell of gas as incense,

the whispers of NPR as a lullaby,

lulling me to sleep

to dream again in a few more hours,

for the life of a CEO, who needs me

so dream big, me

the yachts don't just buy themselves

woke from a dream
the same one my uncle snapped from at sunrise, weirdly,
writing his own poems on the backs of goliath machines
before construction began for the day
a shared dream,
a shared smile,
a shared party,
a shared needle,
a shared diagnosis,
a shared death,

together in my grandma's living room
his blood, the carpet
his pus, the walls
his vomit, the furniture
melded and cross-stitched together with love
in an unholy nightmare
the kind you wish you could wake up from,
but can't

I hope he still writes poetry wherever he is now,
and I hope we're still looking at the same sunrise,
and I hope it's a beautiful one
with a better view, for a change

woke from a dream

by my mom's voice, crying, again

"your uncle tried to kill himself, but they got to his body in time"

they only barely got to mine before he did,

and not exactly in time

"he's going to be okay, they pumped his stomach"

my stomach upended itself,

my esophagus an open wound at fourteen

"he's going to live, he's going to be okay"

will I, looking over my shoulder?

will his ex-wives, looking over theirs?

will his babies, when they wake up from their cocaine dreams,

in the arms of emergency room doctors, not angels?

will he?

woke from a dream
on the interstate at dawn
the sunrise of our new life,
deadly as the old
with dozens of eyes
prizing inside our dream locker
as we huddle, riding the dirty dog
hour forty-two for me,
your whole life on your back, in your little bag,
for you

we gave other passengers
the best gift you could ask for
better than anything on christmas morning
a dreamlike glimpse into another life,
one you'd never want to live,
filtered through the haze of night and unseen police lights
and the waking nightmare of a freshly eighteen vulnerable
and phone calls begging,
begging for help
with an unknown, barely audible
obscured voice on the other end
so soft,
almost imaginary, like a reverie

woke from a dream
it's four in the morning, another slurring call
"I love you so much"
a half-gallon of vodka put away between them
a mile of bruises hidden under blouses
a lifetime of elastic, plastic dreams
stretched and molded and contorted like her body
under the fists of her husbands
into whatever form they see fit
my aunt doesn't need them anyway
theirs are good enough for her,
right?

woke from a dream
it's someone else's now;
a nightmare, a scream, a door slam
and a trail of red on our bathroom floor for me to clean,
in a fog
with the final piece of the puzzle waiting
on the kitchen table the next morning,
as she sleeps
“miscarriage”
I hope her dreams are better now
I hope her screams are fewer now
I hope she's okay
and that no one else has to know the look of her blood on tile

07

woke from a dream
and the whole world's a siren now; my body, so heavy
sleep feels a lifetime away
and the calm in my chest was replaced
by waves crashing on a cliff
pounding in my lungs
I scream and gasp awake,
agonized,
only to find that my bed is gone

my dream, a fantasy
I'm behind a bar again,
with unknown poisons gushing
out of my pores, out of my lips, out of my tears,
and into the glasses
I'm handing to guests, unaware, all of us,
as they tell me to wake up and move a little faster,
they have places to be,
like the morgue

08

woke from a dream
it's christmas; everyone's smiling, everyone's hugging
at the staff party, at my grandma's house, in the streets
laughter infects us all like a drug
while the hastily stuck film
peels back from the lens
and reveals a pit
swarming with flies,
awash in a beautiful,
rainbow sheen of oil

it's starting to feel just a little
like our waking tree of life is poisoned at the root
by a tangled nest of cigarettes, needles, pills, powder, and bottom shelf vices
and long days, calloused hands, piling bills, and court dates
with smiles and happy holiday mornings and joyous memories
that lull us down into the cavernous nothing deep below,
into the impossible and euphoric everything
of a dream

woke from a dream
and it was a happy one, actually, this time
I was sitting upright and tears were streaming down my face,
an unusual position to wake up in
especially for a ten year old
you took my hand, alive again, and pulled me from my small body,
and spirited me away
to see the hidden, buried, massive world in our own house
where shadows move and spirits dwell,
and my kin live when they pass on
in a secret world all their own

it's a rich one, a happy one
with everyone and everything they need,
which is nothing
their souls are invisible, disintegrating, particle,
collecting together,
before becoming everything there is and will be
we flew away, and when I returned,
and you put me back inside of myself,
I understood
words weren't necessary, and they weren't shared anyway
we didn't need them
thank you

fin.