

Jim Meirose

Friendship

DREAMING

Dream. Dream a silly dream—you're to be featured playing a violin solo in front of thousands—you step out on the stage—you never learned the violin. You're afraid. You're about to be found out. But you can't just tell them you don't know violin. It's all set for you to do this—thousands are waiting. What are you going to do? What are you going to do—

AWAKENING

Dawn is full of sun and fresh air, the sleepy people lie in the shadows of their bedrooms wishing for the stars to continue to shine, the morning slimes over them like thick sticky mud.

RISE

Bogged down, you force yourself up. The day is an adventure. Turn off alarm with the push of a plastic button. An adventure? Soles on the wood. Right. Rise; the wood creaks. I spend most of every day being afraid. Dress in a plain shirt and pants. Afraid of what? Bring out dog into the grassy dewy yard. I'd rather not say. Take piss. Well—I want you to be honest with me. Defecate. I am being honest. I told you I am afraid. Put on coffee

in the Proctor-Silex. You've got a problem. Feed dog his bland diet. Why? Feed cat his digestive health food from the pink bag. You don't even know what you're afraid of. Shave with Barbasol. Yes I do. Shower in the filthy moldy shower. Why don't you tell me then—

Take medicine. Green and yellow pill.

BREAKFAST

I'd rather not say. Pour coffee from Proctor-Silex. So what are you up to these days? Make eggs and bacon in a sizzling steel pan. Why are you asking me that? Eat eggs and bacon with white toast on the side. Well, you won't tell me what you're afraid of. Wash dishes in the deep stainless steel sink. So? Bring out dog onto the quickly drying grass..

MORNING

Well I need something to talk to you about. Bring out dog again; he went to the door. So? Take piss. What? In winter, put on heavy quilted coat. What are you up to these days? Go to big Pontiac. I just bought a motorcycle. In winter, scrape frost from windows with the dull long nearly useless plastic scraper. Do you have a motorcycle license? Insert and turn the silver car key. I'm studying for the test. Drive to work down route two eighty seven. I didn't know you could ride a motorcycle. In winter, run heat full blast. It's just like a big fat bicycle you don't have to pedal. In summer, run air conditioning, with the vents pointed straight at your forehead. That's an apt description. Park car in the spot by the fire hydrant. It's a damned good description. Walk into the big black glass office building. What kind of car do you have? Ride stainless steel walled elevator. Rabbit. Go to grey desk in grey cubicle. Rabbit? In winter, take off coat and fold it up and lay it on the cardboard box in the corner. Right. Volkswagen Rabbit. Sit down in the blue office armchair. How do you like it? Turn on the computer; the blue logon screen comes up. It gets me there. Read rows and rows of email. So what are you

going to do over the weekend. Delete most of the email. I don't know. Maybe raise a little hell. Answer email. Type quickly, concentrating. What kind of hell? File email of various kinds in various folders in the computer. I think I'll get out my Dad's old shotgun. Fire off a few rounds. Go get coffee from the cafeteria. You got a shotgun? Pay two dollars for a large coffee. I got three. And a handgun. Come back to the desk; write some facts on a yellow legal pad. You ever shoot them? Run conference calls; announce yourself; ask the others to say their names. Not any more. Take piss. When did you? Attend conference calls; say your name. Years ago, when I used to hunt. Drink coffee from a brown cup. You used to hunt? Read emails. Oh, yes. Fish too. Delete emails. Hunting and fishing. That how you grew up? Answer emails. Type fast. Press send. Yes it is. Why? Sit idle on hands at desk. Oh, I don't know. Drink coffee from a brown cup. I never would have figured you as one that grew up that way. Surf Internet; push buttons; mouse over; read screen. Oh? Why not? Google yourself. Put in your name; read screen. Scroll up, scroll down. You seem a little too sophisticated. Take piss. Sophisticated? How? Defecate.

LUNCH

Oh—oh I don't know. Never mind. Go to cafeteria. There's a crowd in the cafeteria, but you're alone. I think you're saying people who grew up like me are backwards somehow. Buy tuna sandwich on a hard roll with chips. No—not at all. Buy coffee in a brown cup. Then what did that mean? Sit at small round table alone. I think we should drop it. Eat sandwich eat chips. Drop it? Drink coffee from the brown cup. Yes. I'm not comfortable talking like this. I didn't mean anything by what I said. Take tray to garbage disposal belt set into wall. Okay. So what would you be comfortable talking about? Leave tray on moving garbage disposal belt. The tray disappears. Your guns—how many guns did you say you have? Take piss. Four. Go toward office. On the way back, pass people, nod hello. You licensed to have these guns?

AFTERNOON

Go to grey steel desk in grey cubicle. Nope. When I was a kid, you didn't need a license to have a shotgun. Sit down, settle into the chair. Grip the chairarms. Really? But I bet you do now. Log in to blankscreened computer. Oh sure. Read email; there's a nasty one answering what you wrote yesterday. So you're breaking the law. Delete all the other email. I suppose—but laws are made to be broken. Answer the nasty email. Be nice, be nice; the bending reed never breaks. What kind of attitude is that—laws are made for a reason. File the original nasty email and your answer. Answer will come tomorrow. Tomorrow is another day. Really? Go get coffee in a brown cup. Yes—especially gun laws. Pay two dollars for coffee. Huh—I don't even know what the gun laws are. Come back to desk again, settle in. You should. You own a gun. Run conference calls; introduce yourself; ask for others to say their names. Never take notes. Keep it all in your head. You know you're really trying to rub me the wrong way today aren't you? Attend conference calls; say your name. Take notes. There are names and numbers to remember. Need to write them down. What do you mean? Drink coffee from the brown cup. First you look down on people brought up like me—then you call me a criminal because of my guns. Take piss. I didn't call you a criminal. Read email. No answers yet. You said I'm breaking the law. Isn't that the same thing? Delete all the email. There's just three—all junk. Well—no, not really— No need to answer any emails. How is it not really? Sit idle on hands at desk. If I wanted to call you a criminal I'd come right out and use that word. I never used that word. Drink coffee from the brown cup. It's getting cold. But it's still good. Maybe you didn't use that word—but I caught your meaning— Surf Internet. Type in this, type in that. Scroll up and down. And I never said I looked down on how you were brought up. Google yourself; nothing's different from before. Well—I caught your meaning there too. Get up, stretch. You know what? Lock desk with brass key. No what? Go to stainless steel elevator. I don't think we should talk any more. You're misunderstanding everything I say. Take stainless

steel elevator. No I'm not I understand it perfectly. Leave tall black glass building. Well—I don't see why I offended you—but I'm sorry if I did. Go to car. Car's still there. No—no apology necessary. In winter, scrape frost from windows. Well I just— Insert and turn silver key. If that's how you feel about me, why apologize? It starts. Drive home. It's not how I feel about you. In winter, run heat full blast. I just go by what you say. Why do you say it if you don't mean it? In Summer, run air conditioning, with vents pointing to your face. I—I don't know—just don't be mad okay? I value our friendship. Park car on gravel driveway. I value it too. But you said things that— Let dog out onto grass; watch dog defecate. All right! Have it your way! I did mean it all. Pick up plasticwrapped paper from driveway. What? Go into house after unlocking with brass key. I think you were brought up like white trash and I think you're a criminal with all those guns. In winter, take off coat, throw across couch. But you said you didn't mean it— Take piss. I know but you wouldn't listen! It's like you wanted me to mean it! Change clothes. Throw work clothes in hamper. But I— Feed dog his bland diet. So I mean it! I mean it all! Feed cat digestive health cat food from Pink bag. Dump garbage into big black bag; throw in garage. Does this mean we're not friends anymore? Because I don't call someone a friend who believes all that. Turn on radio. Don't listen to what's on. Do it for the noise. A silent house is no good. No I suppose we're not. Sit on couch, settle in. Okay then be that way. Stretch your legs. Feel bones crack. No problem! So long forever. Leaf through paper you take from plastic bag. Good bye. Good riddance. Decide to eat out at the diner. So there he goes. Rise to your feet. So I have just lost my best friend. In winter, put on coat. Just like that you can lose your best friend. Get chain of car and house and desk keys. It seems wrong somehow. Take piss. But it's for the best if that's how he really feels about me. Go out back door. Don't need a friend like that. Lock door with brass key. That kind of friend's no friend. Go to big Pontiac. That's right no friend. Insert and turn key. Time to eat now. Drive Pontiac quickly to diner. I'm hungry.

DINNER

Park Pontiac at diner. Did you know I just lost my best friend? Go into diner up brick steps. Really? How did that happen? In winter, take off coat and hang it on chrome coatrack. I don't know. A silly misunderstanding. Be shown to table for two, alone. Can things be patched up between you? Sit down. Cushion is soft. I don't think so. He called me a white trash criminal. Put napkin on lap. White trash criminal? What does that mean? Look over big diner menu. Everything, they've got everything. It's a long story. At any rate, we were friends for a long time. Put down menu. What would it take to patch things up? I'm sure things can be patched up. Order strong coffee. He'd have to make the first move. And knowing him like I do, he never will. Order dinner—liver and onions. Well—why can't you make the first move? Wait for dinner. Look idly around. No. Because I'm the one who was wronged. Sip coffee. What difference does that make? If you want to be his friend again— Get dinner. The liver and onions look perfect and there's plenty. No. I think I can live without his friendship. Thank waitress. She says you're welcome but she does not smile or linger. Well, if that's how you feel, it must be the right thing to do. Eat dinner. Eat the Meat! Everything comes to an end you know. Drink the drink! That's true. Get check quickly. Life comes to an end too. Leave large tip. Hey don't talk that way. It's too morbid. Pick up check from table. Well, enjoy yourself. Rise. I'll try. Go pay at register. Was everything good? Oh yes. In Winter, put on heavy coat. Go out to car. Well I'm alone in the world now. Get in car. Nobody to talk to any more. Insert and turn key. We used to talk a lot. Drive home. About a lot of things. Stop for Dunkin' Donuts coffee on way home. Large black as usual. Maybe I should make the move to patch things up? Park in your driveway. After all it was a silly argument. Let dog out. Look up. Twilight stars. Yes. Go inside up rickety back steps. I'll call him up. Put down coffee. Offer an olive branch. In winter, take off coat. Yes that's a good saying. Take piss. Olive branch.

EVENING

Take piss. Hi. Fix coffee with Sweet and Low and skim. Oh hi. What do you want? Go to La-Z-Boy recliner. I want to say I'm sorry about before and I want us to be friends again. Put down coffee on table to the side. I feel the same way. Pick up grey plastic remote. So that's it? Switch on television. That's it. Flip channels. That sure was a stupid argument. Watch television. What shows aren't important. That's true. Drink coffee. But you really ought to get those guns licensed.

NIGHT

Why? At nine, take dog out into the dark. Bright stars and moon are casting shadows. Because it's the right thing to do. Take piss. You mean you're still— Come in. You are breaking the law you know—I mean now that we're friends and all—a friend should be able to tell a friend how he feels. Sit down in recliner. But why should I get the guns licensed? Watch more television. There's a local guitarist on the public access channel. Because— what is somebody finds out you've got unlicensed guns? Finish coffee. Who's going to find out? At eleven, take dog out for final piss. I found out. Turn off television. Yes but that was because you're my friend and I told you. Lock and latch front door. Am I your friend? Take nighttime medicine. I thought so. I said I was sorry about before— Turn off Chinese style lights. I don't really know if I'm your friend. Head up to flowered wallpapered bedroom. Why not?

GO TO BED

Take off clothes. Toss them in heap on floor. Because it bothers me you've got those guns. I don't like guns. Take piss. So that's a reason to not be friends? Set alarm. In my book, yes. Look in mirror. You're overweight. Turn out light. All right I'm sorry you feel that way. Get in bed conscious of your big belly. Good bye. Lie there and wait. Good bye. Drift away. It's a good bed. It cost enough.

GO TO SLEEP

Sleep. Night is full of stars and fresh air, the sleeping people are oblivious to the stars shining above. The thick sticky mud of the day sloughs off.

DREAMING

Dream. Dream a silly dream—you're to be featured playing a violin solo in front of thousands—you step out on the stage—you never learned the violin. You're afraid. You're about to be found out. But you can't just tell them you don't know violin. It's all set for you to do this—thousands are waiting. What are you going to do? What are you going to do—