

My Paradise of Daydreams

By Dennis Payton Knight

I was born afflicted, but the first time I learned it had a name was when my parents returned from a parent teacher conference with the nuns at Saint Laurence School. "Sister says you're a daydreamer," my mother reported. My father simply figured I had been gazing out the windows, "God knows what at."

The rebuke fulfilled their parental duties, but if it included a lecture, it was only implied, because neither of them offered a cure. They didn't say the sisters offered one either. They probably all suffered the same affliction. What are windows for after all?

It has been a lifelong affliction for me, daydreaming. A luxurious, comfortable, state of addiction, and I am glad nobody has tried an intervention.

Daydreaming is contemplation. Thinking about stuff. Happy stuff, sad stuff. It doesn't matter. I am daydreaming on this zero-degree March morning about the first crocus of spring. I know it is waiting there, in a state of suspended animation, poised for the thaw, ready to pop through the icy snow covering the Highline Canal trail beyond my window. Daydreaming lets me see it.

Daydreaming is inspiring in its aimlessness. It is not so much nostalgia for what was or hope for what might be. It is merely the contemplation of what is now. It is fuel for farmers, fishermen, bird watchers, cowgirls, poets and teachers. Daydreams were fodder for Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, Rowling's *Harry Potter*.

A Doctor Seuss daydream cooked up green eggs and another put a hat on his cat. It was in daydreams that Einstein hatched his theories about the physical universe. Daydreaming painted the pictures of van Gogh and Picasso. Daydreaming wrote the lyrics for Paul Simon and Cole Porter. Even educated fleas do it.

Daydreaming is a fleeting diversion, without expectations and seldom with conclusions. It is not so much a lack of concentration as it is a concentrated absence of concentration. It is the art of focusing on nothing while absorbing everything, seeing the forest and not the trees, and pondering that, but for the trees, there would not be a forest. Think about it.

You don't have daydreams so much as daydreams have you. They come naturally, like the bald spot that once was your cowlick or the fuzz in your belly button. There are no clocks in daydreaming, no alarms set to remind you to start, no timers to tell you to stop. There are no how-to manuals. If the nuns say you are a daydreamer, thank God for the gift. You didn't get it from the devil.

I have never searched for a cure to my daydreams. In fact, I wouldn't even dream of it. They are the mountains for my ideas to climb, the oceans for my mind to surf, the winds for my thoughts to fly nowhere and yet everywhere.

Daydreams are the firmament of my paradise, and I'm glad we can share them together.