

UWHARRIE DREAMS

Randolph Community College Creative Writing Magazine

The AMPLIFY issue

 Fiction

 Poetry

 Photography

Spring 2021

UWHARRIE DREAMS

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Written works were declared the winners in their genre categories in the Uwharrie Dreams Creative Writing Contest of Fall 2020. Winning photos from the Uwharrie Dreams Call for Art/Photography Submissions of Spring 2021 are also featured, including a cover art winner. Congratulations to you all!

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Cover photo: BreAnna Hicks

The Beat of the Ocean

by Lance Davis

I was the only one able to feel the pulsating vibrations broadcasting themselves from the ocean's horizon against my bare palms. The midnight air had made the sand below my feet chill, but soothing. When I closed my eyes and inhaled the salty air, I felt like I was absorbing the faint beating of the drum in the distance, as if sound waves were being sent into my body by the gods of the ocean. Were they trying to tell me something?

Every night after the sun had gone down and everyone had gone home, I witnessed another instance of the power. No one would've ever known a small village on the coast of Japan could be so unordinary. The bright, creamy moon hovering above the ocean always generated more than enough light to make my way to my usual spot. It was nothing special, just an elevated piece of land I'd taken an interest in. At first, I'd thought that the elevation may help me to communicate with the gods better, but nothing changed. I never was able to communicate back with them, after all.

I'd stumbled across the vibrations of the ocean one night when I was unable to sleep and decided to take a walk on the beach. My family's business was a local fishing shop, and we were one of only two businesses that provided oceanic necessities to the entire village. This meant that we lived on the beach, and after I finished helping my family out with their duties, I was able to enjoy the ocean whenever I wanted. I got very few days off though, as my family needed as much help as they could get following my older brother's departure. After he had left, I found myself with his share of chores. He really was my best friend and the one person I could've always relied on. But as time went on after he'd gone, I noticed the mood in the household falter and become dimmer. And that just wasn't my household, either. The people who usually came to the beach every day had slowly stopped coming, and eventually, this place was far less popular. Sooner than later, the beach's populace had dropped to under a quarter of its original daily participants. A few nights

after most of the people had stopped coming was when I first began going out and feeling the vibrations at night.

With my work, and the pressure being put on me by my parents, I never had time to make any friends at school. After the last school bell had rung for the day, I would come straight home and get to work. After all, someone like me was never meant to be anyone special. That was my life. I was born into a struggling family of three, and my entire reason for existence was to work and eventually take over the family business. Well, technically that was supposed to be my brother's future, but he was never meant for that life. He was special.

After years of begging our parents to get him a guitar, they finally gave in and got him one for his 15th birthday. The moment he first laid his eyes on the antique, un-tuned instrument, he was in love. Ever since that day, he knew music was his passion and nothing was going to stop him from achieving his dreams of becoming famous.

All the free time he managed to get, he'd be playing that guitar. He was obsessed with it. He wanted nothing more than to just vanish with his guitar, while I listened to his endless melodies. He was amazing. Just a short time after obtaining the instrument, he was comparable to some of the greats that'd be playing on the radio. His potential was wasted here, and there was nothing he nor I could do about it. As time went on after countless confrontations with our parents, I could feel the tension between them at dinner every night. That's when, six months later, he devised a plan for us to escape.

Brother had gotten fed up with our parents at this point, and, one night, finally said those two magical words: "Let's escape." I never thought he'd ever tell me that; I was stunned. As soon as the 11:00 p.m. mark hit, he silently crawled up to my bed on the top bunk and whispered it to me.

"Escape, right now?" I asked in confusion.

"Yeah, mom and dad are probably asleep by now and this is the perfect opportunity.

Pack your bag, we're leaving." He slowly got down from the top bunk and tossed me my school bag. "You can't make too much noise or else they'll get suspicious."

I looked inside my school bag with all my papers and schoolwork in it. "What do I do with all the stuff inside?"

He looked up from packing his clothes. "Huh? Oh, just throw it out. It's not like you'll be needing it anymore."

I diligently listened to him, emptied my belongings, and started filling my bag with clothes as well. He seemed to have already had all the things he needed packed, including his guitar. I soon finished and announced I was ready to leave. I didn't know what he had planned, but I knew he was the one who needed to escape this village the most, not me.

"Okay, so the last train out of this hell hole leaves in approximately two and a half hours at 1:30. It should take us two to get there on foot and we just ate, so we should be fine. You're up to the task, right?"

"Of course."

The village only had two ways out: the sole train on the very northern end of the village or the very suspect road that led east. The second option was impossible for us though, as a car was needed, and our parents kept the key in their room.

"What will we do when we get to the train stop?" I asked. "How will we be able to board it? I don't have any money."

"Don't worry about it. I've been taking a little money from the register every day. They never noticed so I think we should be fine." He slung the shoulder strap of his school bag across his body and looked out of our sole window.

"Are you crazy? They'll kill us if they find out!" I zipped up my bag and approached him.

"I said don't worry, didn't I?" They can't kill us if we escape, you know. Now pick up your bag, we're leaving. Stay silent." As I followed, we carefully exited our one-story home out of the back door and continued north towards the train stop.

The January air was freezing as the gust of the wind hissed. The snow of the night was both above our heads and under our feet at the same time. We walked through the slushy, car-less road, as the snow slowly built upon our black hair. The faint street lights and the radiating moon were the only light sources we had. Side by side, we soldiered through the chill. There was no looking back now.

Two hours later through the harsh winter weather, we arrived at the outdoor train-stop, not a single soul in the area. We then sat down at a bench in front of the boarding-site under a small shelter and waited, side-by-side.

Forty-five minutes had passed, and it was 1:45 a.m.; we were as cold as ice. Brother had been attempting to play his guitar, but the piercing wind blowing was just too numbing to our skin. Even so, he tried playing anyway, just for the cold to tense up the guitar strings and distort the sound. A single light was barely hanging above us, only lighting the small space around us. Through this light, our steamy breath could be seen, and our hope was slowly diminishing.

Brother stood up with his arms crossed and a pained look on his face. "Damn it! Damn it! Where is that train? We're going to freeze to death out here!" He roamed around the area, looking up and down the empty track. I continued to watch him skitter around with my hands stuffed in my pockets for warmth.

While gazing out beyond the train-stop watching the snow fall slowly to the ground, Brother caught my attention.

"Hey, look at those lights!" A smile emerged as he pointed to the direction of one end of the train-track. A bright light was closing in from a distance at a steady speed. We both watched as the beam got closer to our location, but something wasn't right. At first, I thought my nearly frozen eyelids were affecting my vision, but that wasn't the case. The glow in the distance seemed to slowly make its way on the road we used to travel here. When Brother noticed the revelation, I could visibly see the sorrow that had just been cast upon his face. He lowered his gaze and sat back down on the bench.

"This is so stupid," he murmured.

I watched as the brightness grew closer and closer until it finally got within my clear line of sight, under the moonlight. It was a car coming towards our direction at a steady pace. After a few seconds had passed, the glare was now only a couple of meters away. I continued to stare at the car while Brother's face turned crestfallen, his eyes filling with despair. I could see the hundreds of snowflakes falling to the ground through the car's front lights. I started to panic and put my hand

on his shoulder. "Hey, what do we do now? Let's get out of here!"

He glanced up at me and back to the ground. "It'd just get worse if we ran." His monotone voice echoed in my head. My eyes were glued onto the man walking towards us, the headlights of his car making him appear as a shadow. As soon as I saw the face of the man from the faint glow above us, I knew why Brother was acting this way.

It was our father.

"Get in," were the only words he spoke as we followed him back to the car with regret cemented on our faces. The ride home was just about as quiet as that night a little over a year and a half ago. That drive back home was also the turning point in our lives.

After my father had parked the car in our short driveway, he kept the doors locked and sat in his seat for over a minute before telling me I was the only one allowed to go inside. I glanced over at Brother, and he nodded at me. I then slowly got out of the car, took my bag, and went to my room.

Soon it was nearly 3:00 a.m. when he finally came back into our room. With the lamp on the windowsill beside our bed, I could see the look on his face, but couldn't make out the emotions behind it.

"Hey, what happened? Are you okay?" I asked. But he didn't respond. It was unlike him to act so down. I watched as he turned off the lamp and plopped into bed.

When I woke up the next morning, I noticed something wasn't right. It wasn't the sound of the room, but rather the absence of it. Brother's strum of the guitar in the morning is what woke me up every day. It'd become white noise for my satisfaction. That was the first day of many to come without his melodies.

After that day six months had passed, and Brother had only recently gotten his guitar back. I could've only assumed their reason for giving it back was pity. After all, the last night we'd see each other again was that night on June 7th.

It was a week after I'd started coming to my elevated spot on the beach, and that night was my brother's last. All alone together, he played some of the greatest hits he knew, and even some originals. I just sat and listened, my hands in the air facing the ocean and my eyes closed. I could feel them, the spectacular vibrations coming from the ocean. That night was almost perfect until he told me he was leaving and wouldn't come back for a while. I was stunned.

"What do you mean? Are we going to make an escape again?" I wondered.

It was the same look, the very expression he was making that snowy January night. "No, I'm going alone." He joylessly played with the strings on his guitar. "I have to, no questions asked. That's why..."

"What? What do you mean? You're not making any sense!" My voice started to shake; my emotions were getting the better of me. "Th-that's why what?"

He stood up from the sand and walked over to me, then sat down beside me on top of my elevated area with his guitar.

"That's why I'm leaving this to you," he stuck out his hands and in them, the guitar. He then laid it in the sand in front of us when he knew I wasn't accepting his proposal.

"But...I can't play that! And...why are you doing this?"

He stayed silent while he raised his hands to the ocean and closed his eyes. I wasn't sure why he didn't want to tell me anything at the time, and I'm glad he didn't. Brother knew me; he knew what it meant to protect the ones he cared for. And in my heart, I knew he knew what he was doing. I trusted him.

"It seems the vibrations have been amplifying lately," he observed.

"Yes, they have...So, where are you headed then?"

"It doesn't matter. I'm just glad I'll finally be leaving this place."

"I'll come with you then! Just me and you!"

"Sorry, I refuse your offer. You can't come."

Now, exactly a year later, I reside in the spot where he said those last words to me. It's been a silent year without him, and seeing his guitar every morning just leaning up against the wall always puts an empty feeling in my heart. Sometimes I try playing it, but it just isn't the same. Even now, while I stand on the coast under the night sky, I can still hear the beat of the ocean. But with the loneliness of the last year in the past, I will finally join him. It isn't of my own volition, but it doesn't matter.

I only wonder if the beating will ever stop. I hope so.

what it's like to live in silence

by Sarah Hurley

Voices crowd my head and I wonder
if you hear them, too. My grandfather
yelling about pecans and pickled
limes and my grandmother with the
laundry, her hands shriveled up in
water that smells like sugar and rain.

Have you wondered what it's like to be forgotten?

I look outside the window and I see
peace within the trees. Jam dripping
from children's fingers // sticky-sweet //
as they swing from the tallest branches,
singing songs that would curl their
parents' toes inside their boots.

Have you wondered what it's like to stand alone?

And if I told you that I loved you,
would it be **LOUD ENOUGH?**
Would it be **bold enough?**
Would it be true enough?

(No.)

I grasp at straws across a sea of stolen
lifetimes—and maybe in another one
I found you. ***This is desperation.*** Your
name is a strangled gospel choir on the
tip of my unholy tongue. I ask you:

AM—I—LOUD—ENOUGH?

I am.

I am.

I am.

(I'm sorry.)

This is what it's like to live in silence.

Elizabeth Alderman





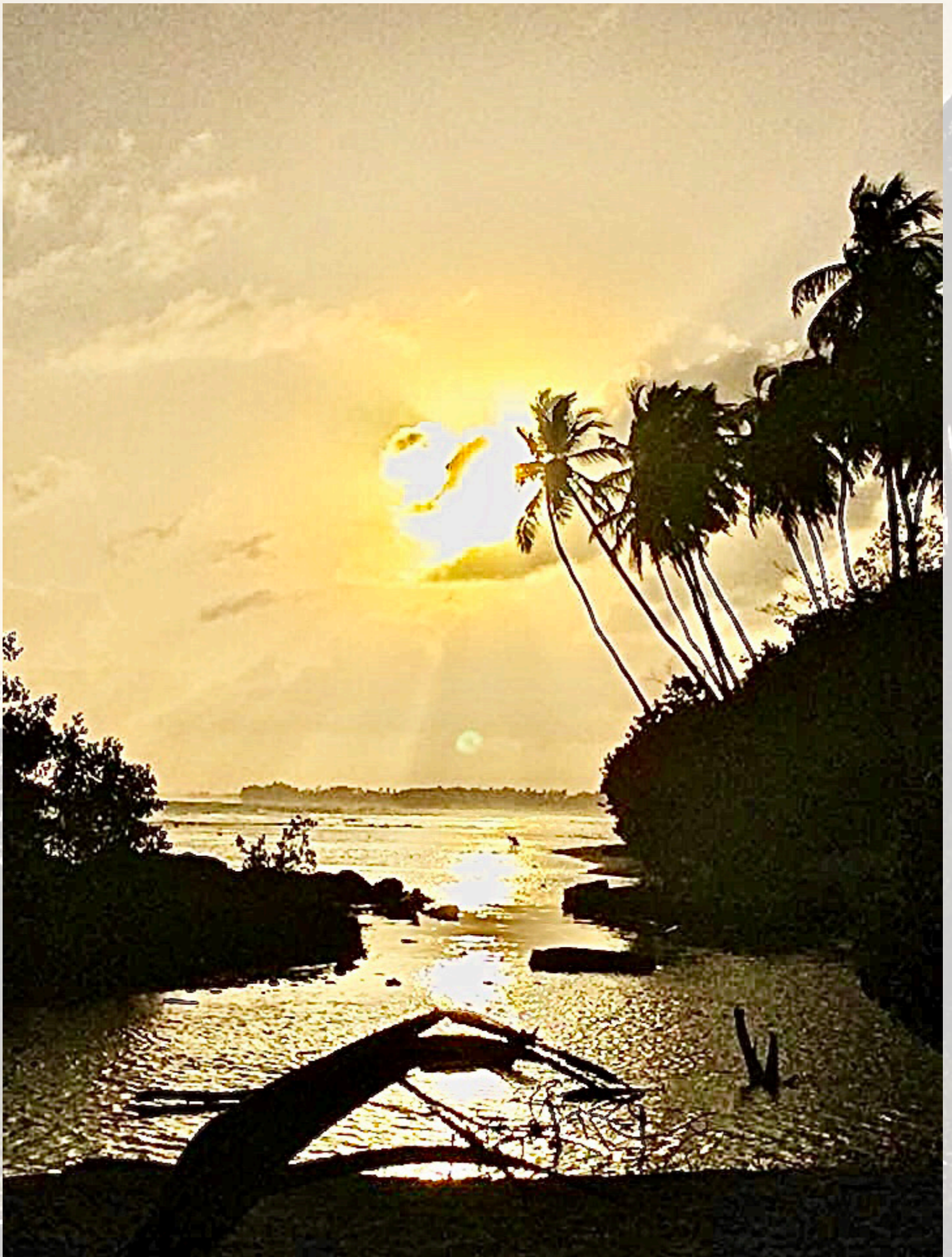
Daniel Amick





BreAnna Hicks





NOTE FROM THE EDITORS:

Thank you all for your contributions to the Uwharrie Dreams Spring 2021 “Amplify” issue. We appreciate all of the hard work everyone put into their submissions.

We owe special thanks to Felicia Barlow and her staff in the Marketing Department for the publication of this issue. Thank you also to Shane Bryson, the Office of Student Life, and the RCC Student Government Association for helping to keep our club afloat.

Congratulations to our cover art winner BreAnna Hicks!

We wish you all the very best with your future literary efforts and hope to see more from you in the near future. Look to the Uwharrie Dreams Moodle page for information about upcoming events.

Victoria Davis

Dr. Gregory W. Vance

