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Booklover -- Dreams

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Dreams. We all have them. Whether they scare us to wake in the middle of the night or pleasantly occupy our mind during a dreary day, our dreams can define us. The dream of doing something significant, award-winning, is probably one that most of us have. So when my friend Jim asks: “Why this specific interest in Nobel Laureates in Literature, why not Pulitzer Prize winners?” I have to confess, that dream of doing something significant, award winning, and inspiring is also mine.

“This is my ticket to Stockholm” is an often muttered-under-the-breath comment of a research scientist laboring in the lab. Labeling tubes, repetitive aliquoting, collecting samples, recording and interpreting data, and writing grants can sometimes seem mind-numbing until that “Eureka!” moment. We constantly joke as we brainstorm theories, experiments, and hypotheses that this will be the “definitive” concept that will win that storied trip to Sweden, an invitation to a black tie dinner, and a few extra dollars. Humor and dreams abound in some labs. I have been fascinated with books AND science since I was knee high to a microscope. In the library or in the lab — I’m at home. So the fascination with Nobel Laureates in Literature is a natural extension of the dream for recognition. No mysteries here. The mystery is in how the same words are sometimes award-winning and sometimes boring. I’m sure Jim will not be satisfied by this abridged explanation, although he did point out that Oneirology is the science of dreams. Now I have something else to add to the research list.

The two labs where I work are located on opposite ends of the Medical University of SC (MUSC) campus. One reward of the numerous daily treks between locations is I get to walk by the library. As I walked between labs a few weeks ago I noticed a poster on the library doors advertising a “Get Connected Technology Fair.” I marked the date in my calendar. I arrived on time to discover that I was first in line to enjoy “toy day” in the library. Sympodia, Tegrity, Adobe Connect, Moodle, Wii, Wiki, Kindle, Facebook, Medica, Low country Digital Library, PASCAL, Rosetta Stone, Flip videos, digital cameras, pocket-size projectors for laptops were all there for us to put our hands on and experience. PASCAL was one service that really caught my attention. PASCAL (Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries) is a consortium of academic libraries in South Carolina designed to address the information-access needs in South Carolina. “You want to try it?” asked the librarian. “Sure!” I said. So we entered ‘Nobel Laureates in Literature’ in the keyword search box and a short list of books appeared on the screen. “Do you want to order one?” she asked. “Of course.” I said.

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Each dream is short, yet some how busy. You awake with him in the middle of a scenario carrying some meaning, defining a feeling of his about the world and its conflicts. He is on the street, at his house in Abbasya, praising God, looking for love, bathing naked in the shadow of a crescent moon, hungry — “faint with starvation yet enticed by hope.”

As I read the dreams I found myself marking Dreams 5, 20, 30, 55, 57, 77, 84, and 85 with bright orange post-it notes. I re-read these marked Dreams several times while writing this column as I wanted to include one dream in the text. I narrowed the mental debate to Dreams 5 and 57. Unable to choose I finally decided to leave you with both Dreams.

“Dream 5. — I am walking aimlessly without anywhere in particular to go when suddenly I encounter a surprising event that had never before entered my mind — every step I take turns the street upside-down into a circus. The walls and buildings and cars and passersby all disappear, and in their place a big top arises with its tiered seats and long, hanging ropes, filled with trapezes and animal cages, with actors and acrobats and musclemen and even a clown. At first I am so happy that I could soar with joy. But as I move from street to street where the miracle is repeated over and over, my pleasure subsides and my irritation grows until I tire from the walking and the looking around, and I long in my soul to go back to my home. But just as I delight once again to see the familiar face of the world, and trust that soon my relief will arrive, I open the door and find the clown there to greet me, giggling.”

“Dream 57. — I walked around the fort twice — a citadel of stone whose windows were like tiny holes. From each window appeared a face that I not only knew, but adored. Some had been traveling a long while; others had departed our world at different times. I stared with passion and grief — and imagined that each one was begging from its depths for me to set them free. After looking hopelessly at the stone fort’s gate, I went to the authorities to ask for help.

I left them feeling satisfied, clutching a pole made of steel, and returned to the fort. I brandished the pole, and the faces peered out as I struck a mighty blow at the door, which split apart and collapsed. The faces banished from the windows as shouts of joy and pleasure rose up, and I stopped, my heart beating hard — waiting to meet the dear ones with longing and desire.”

If you want to read the other 102, PASCAL is very user-friendly. 🌍