

Eyelash, Flashlight, Shadow Bike

Remi Graves

Some dreams are purely utilitarian. Hardly any fantasy, no flying, no magic or impossibility made possible, just a flickering record of an experience that is yet to happen in real life, but might. Only a subtle alien quality to the dream's light helps you know this isn't real, though it could be. Sarah Turner's 'A Tale Part Told' feels just like this. Shot on Super 8, it depicts the shadow of a bike gliding over fast moving tarmac. The road is water at this speed. A river of light. A sculpture in motion. A tonal rattle with a touch of reverb comes in and out sporadically. We become witnesses to an abstracted three-part choreography; bike, light, noise. Four if we count the dance of our own eyes taking it all in. As we move between obscurity and the shadow bike, the unpredictable ringing out of the rattle, a loose kind of rhythm appears. I can never spell it, a word that won't be caught. The silent 'h' trips me up, and after being thrown off, I don't know where to put the other letters.

search party spoke
loop throw rattle
backwards wheel tumbling

The film was born from a dream. A woman tells us about her newborn baby; bilingual and computer-literate at just six weeks old. 'It's simpler in French: rythme,' the baby might say. Spell it just as it sounds, throw the 'h' out with the bathwater, let it dance on the wind. The speaker in the film learns French just to keep up with her newborn. That's how it is, isn't it, in love? You learn to speak in whatever way allows you to hear one another. You develop a language you can both become fluent in over time.

Je m'excuse

Some dreams keep a hold of you in the waking world. You search for signs in your daily life of what you saw when you were asleep. You follow the glint of a symbol, the shudder of a resonance; you keep an eye out for the shadow of the shape of what was felt, all you were able to glean with eyes shut. You reach out for another language, the

rhythm of ellipsis, a shadow-speak where understanding is presumed, or else entirely beside the point. Sometimes a story lands in your lap, and you walk around in search of the language it wants to speak.

fingers dancing blue
blink around time
rattle loop throw

Both times I've fallen off my bike, I was the culprit, there was no one else to blame. The first time, I'd turned around for a split second, only to crash into a parked car at a hilariously slow pace. Nothing was broken but I hadn't considered that going too slow could be as dangerous as speeding. That speed might be safer, in some cases. The second time, my bag of groceries (bread and biscuits) got caught in my front wheel and I briefly lost control of the handlebars. If I'd been going any faster... who knows. Sarah filmed her footage while careering down a hill in Montreal. I imagine her, one hand on the handlebar, the other gripping her Super 8 with conviction. The actual hill is of no consequence in the film, the peak could be anywhere, it's the descent that counts. Down is where the real things are.

'You've got to learn to stand on your own two feet'

I can't tell if the spokes of the bike are moving backwards or forwards. I'm beginning to get disorientated. The beginning feels like the end, and the end feels out of reach. If I'm out on a walk, or exploring a new place, I hate going back on myself. I'd rather walk in the wrong direction, or go the long way round, than walk back the way I've come. Something about admitting a mistake... It's a habit I'm trying to break. I tell myself over and over that there's no shame in walking backwards. Rewind the thing until it makes sense to you, until you can bear to relive the memory without reviling it. Revolt as many times as you need, as in pivot, rotate, but try not to turn on yourself, that kind of betrayal can be hard to come back from.

throw rattle loop
a moth flickers past or
the road runs out

A flashlight appears for a split second and casts a beam of light through my mind. It's searching for all the dreams that kept me turning. The ones that interrupted my sleep, the ones I didn't want to wake from. It wants to grab meaning out of thick air, which is another way of saying the end. But how does one get off a bike in motion? How do you stop a dream while dreaming it? It's a question of rhythm, finding the right time to swing your leg over and plant your foot onto moving ground.

Remi Graves is a poet and drummer. A former Barbican Young Poet, their work has been commissioned by St Paul's Cathedral, Arthouse Jersey and BBC Radio 4. They have performed at Tate, Cheltenham Literature festival and more. Remi has led courses at The Poetry School and facilitates in schools and community spaces across London and the South East. Remi's debut pamphlet with your chest was published by fourteen poems in 2022. They were a 2025 La Maison Baldwin Fellow and a writer in residence at Jan Michaslki Foundation. Remi is the winner of 2024 Prototype Prize (short form category), 'coal' was published by Monitor Books in 2025.

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