

Dreams

By Ally Russo

When I was five, I dreamt of fairies
Of their sparkling dresses and delicate wings
I would pretend to soar weightless above
the clouds
Created a collection of magical things
Nothing was impossible
The world was my playground
Imagination filled my days with fun
And made light of the world around

When I was eight, I dreamt of being a
ballerina
Of billowing tutus of tulle and pale pink
pointe shoes
My hair pulled back tight in a bun as I went
off to class
When I fell, the worst outcome was a bruise
I floated around the house and twirled
through the town
Made Mum sit through show after show in
the living room
She watched every one of them with a
beaming smile
Embracing me in a crushing hug full of love
and the smell of her perfume

When I was ten, I dreamt of travelling the
world
Of sunny beaches and bustling city streets
Envious I was of those who could wander
freely
And of my aunty who would bring me back
stories and exotic treats
Pouring over dusty books filled with
picturesque landscapes
Mum and Dad showing me faded pictures
from their travels
Eyes wide and full of childish adventure
Until the day I watched as my dream
unravels

When I was thirteen, I dreamt of gloomy
hospital rooms
Of beeping machines and weary faces
Through quiet days and sombre nights

Nurses flit back and forth leaving no traces
My blooming mum once full of light
Lying drained and dark in a hospital bed
She tries to hide the pain, the hurt
But I see how hard it is for her to hold up
her head

When I was fourteen, I dreamt of miracles
Of life-saving cures and astounding
recoveries
But doctor's faces remained grim
No new last-minute discoveries
We knew the day would come
When we would have to say goodbye
My dad and I, we held her fragile hand
Felt her spirit lifting up to the sky

When I was fifteen, I dreamt of her
Of her bubbling laugh and the sweet smell
of her perfume
The way she sang as she worked in the
garden
The roses she planted still yet to bloom
The house is quiet and cold without her
A thick wall of grief keeps Dad and I apart
Heat climbs my throat threatening to burst
from my mouth
When people tell me that she'll always be in
their heart

I want to scream
I want to cry
I want to burst
I want to shout
I want these people gone from my house
To shut up and just get out
I need to sleep
I need to eat
I need to shower
I need to heal
But how can I do any of that when my mum
When my mum is no longer here

When I was sixteen, I dreamt of helping
others

Of making miracles and saving lives
So no one else would have to lose someone
they love
No more daughters, no more mums, no
more wives
While I thought I was doing this for the
world
Now I know that wasn't really the truth
I need something to pull me out of the dark
hole of grief
To push me past the pain that tainted my
youth

When I was eighteen, I dreamt of failing
Of big red Fs and disappointed head shakes
I studied bent over books the size of bricks
Until my eyes would blur, and my body was
full of aches
My hands shook when I entered my exam
Brain whizzing full of terms and coffee
A gleaming yellow envelope came in the
mail
I screamed with joy and Dad's eyes were
glossy

When I was twenty, I dreamt of moving to
the city
Of a tiny apartment and a crazy roommate
Dad helped me back my bags and shove
them in my car
I drove away from home thinking of the
adventures that await
The city is cramped with chaos on every
turn
Towering buildings speckled with gleaming
lights
I watch from my window high above the
ground
Glad that I got over my fear of heights

When I was twenty-one, I dreamt of getting
the job
Of an orderly lab and bubbling beakers
Finally stretching and testing my brain
Since listening to all those high school
speakers
Walking into the bustling room
It feels like being a teenager all over again

Trying to climb my way to the top
Fighting in a world dominated by entitled
men

When I was twenty-two, I dreamt of
equations
Of crunching numbers and mixing elements
Disregarded and ignored, I worked on my
own
Privately celebrating my slow developments
Spending sleepless nights at my work bench
In a cold and empty lab
Pulling out my hair in the early morning
light
Trying not to fall asleep in the cab

But I knew it would be worth it
When I finally cracked the code
Because it would mean repaying my mother
My mother whom I owed

Then one day it just clicked
I stared in disbelief
My hands began to shake
My body heavy with relief
I screamed
I cried
I shouted
And those men they all came running
Here was the cure not one of them could
make
Born from the woman they had all been
shunning

Now I am twenty-four and my dream has
come true
My goal once impossible now fulfilled
So I'm searching for a new one, my eyes
wide open
Feeling scared and excited and ready to
pursue