

## Two Against One

It's 8 in the evening  
and I'm at the public library  
hanging out the 13<sup>th</sup> dream  
to dry in someone's warm  
and inviting living room  
where I wait while the sisters  
like my own two sisters  
have gone upstairs to get ready  
for our previously planned outing:  
a social gathering on behalf  
of the yearly anniversary  
of our mother's death.  
But when just one of  
them comes downstairs  
she abruptly announces  
they've changed their minds  
and decided they're going  
to attend the service together  
just the two of them without me,  
after which she proceeds  
to trot out the supposed benefits:  
that I'd get to bed early and be back  
at their place even earlier the next day.  
(Why? I think to myself,  
to make breakfast for them?!")

In a state of mind-boggling disbelief  
and outrage at their blatant  
disregard for my feelings  
I tell them what they can do  
with their nasty little witches' brew  
of a betrayal and that I never want to see  
them again. I tell them to fuck off  
when they reprimand me for my  
outburst and I leave the library.

As I'm doing so, I find myself  
taking note of the young man  
a few steps ahead—in his twenties  
shabbily dressed, and hobbling along  
in the cold. Then without a hint or warning  
in one fell swoop of heart-wrenching empathy  
for his misfortune, my all-consuming  
sense of exclusion—(*to be shut out  
from consideration, privilege, etc*)—  
is absorbed and born anew.

Joe L,  
2017

Note: This is an alternative version of "Dream Thirteen,"  
included in *The Dreamer and the Dreamed*.