

Space for Dreams

Alexa Solveig Mardon & Aisha Sasha John

In September 2020, I invited ten dance artists, some of whom are close friends and some of whom have never met one another, to participate in an ongoing daily-ish dream recording practice with no specific goal other than to see what would happen. Four months in, it has become clear that this fifty-page-and-counting document is a dance process. The intimacy of dancing together is present: by way of sharing things whose impact is still unknown, knowing each other not through facts but through witnessing. We show up in each other's dreams more often than not and, sometimes, in each other's movement or studio practices. The dreams recounted here are from Aisha's and my archive during this time.

– Alexa Solveig Mardon

October 6, Aisha

I am given an assignment or the task of creating the billboard for some sort of spectacle—some ring—that my mom is going to be competing in (and winning?). The task is given to me by a Hollywood actress I admire. What is both difficult and rewarding about the task is that I have to use the force of my creative will to conjure the images. So there are like four panels. And I stare at the panel until the right image just materializes itself into being. The first panel I get at the first go. It has gold shimmering tassels and includes the word “compelling”? But then I struggle for a while to get the numbers right for the prize amounts. Like you can win between \$5 and \$30 for this particular ringed event, but there’s another event whose prize is \$30 (that’s the one my mom has been slated to get). And anyway it’s my task to express the difference between the two events and to conjure the right-sized, -shaped, and -coloured numbers to advertise these prizes. I remember choosing between displaying \$15, \$25, \$30 or starting lower and including \$5 and \$10 as well. My choice is a marketing decision as well as a function of the amount of panel space I have given the size of the text I am generating. At some point the woman who gave me the assignment notices I’m ending in \$25 rather than \$30 and is like, *You want them to know how high they can win*, which I of course know—but I’m more interested in the numbers themselves and getting to express them, and I’ve already done 30 in another panel and don’t want to repeat it for my own, like, sensual reasons. I remember how at one successful point the numbers were shaped like the block letters I doodle—sort of machete-shaped—and were pewter (metallicness was an important design element) and how the panels that I’d conjured right away were gold, yes, and maybe included a woman with tasseled epaulets, like musical theatre-esque sexy military costume ... ? Think cigarette ad from the 50s/60s.

October 9, Alexa

My right arm has fallen off or has been cut or torn off. I’m in a truck bed that is going somewhere fast. It’s from a scene in a Raymond Carver story or maybe a Steinbeck story, green hills and a lot of salt of the earth Americana white men vibes. Someone, maybe Rhye, is trying to sew my arm back on and it’s pretty normal until the actual puncture of the needle in my skin hurts and I realize it’s going to be quite painful. I ask for an injection of local anaesthetic; no one knows where the

med tent is. Me and the person who is trying to sew my arm back on realize that the skin itself will probably rot and then the arm will fall back off again because I'm not a starfish and it won't grow back. I realize that even if the arm is sewn back on expertly I will have to keep the arm hanging down by my side and not raise it above my head for a long time while it fuses itself to my shoulder. My first thought is that I have a lot of grants to write and that this will be really inconvenient and so I had better just leave it, I'm left-handed anyway. Then some kind of music video where S and I and E and their whole very hot very young dance company rent a float plane and a drone and shoot a very complex dance film/video where S is a hot robot flight attendant with her boobs out (the editing is super pro) and they manage to have the drone fly alongside the plane so there is a very beautiful aerial shot and I wonder where they got the funding to do this and why they chose to use it on this. It's a sort of screening but the screening is just for my parents and I feel embarrassed that it's not my work that they are watching but this very flashy and a bit risqué video. Then some big ocean waves. More travelling, flying over the water even. A different time where there are big castles overlooking a loch.

October 18, Aisha

A door flashes open: radiant black and white cat sits atop a dusty mess.

November 14, Aisha

I'm an actress in a business suit on a film set playing against a woman who is like a B version of Julia's mom. Apparently she'd worked with Hanako on the same set days before, and Hanako was *very good*. And as we're both complementing Hanako's acting chops, I have this image of Hanako dressed in a lawyer lady suit similar to the one I'm in but with a face more angular and terse than Hanako's actual face. I am showing off my knowledge of Hanako to the lady like yah she brings snacks to rehearsals in reusable bags. Then there are a bunch of extras in ill-fitting blue and white striped shirts who are all those dudes I went to U of T with and who I basically resent. Imara is there with these yellow contact lenses which look ridiculous and he asks me how I've been in a competitive is-your-life-as-good-as-mine kinda way and I respond that it's been good and also terrible. Then I go to

the bathroom to pee and when I come back to the courtroom I break out into a tap dance. I'm wearing ugly red loafers, the kind I try on all the time at Value Village, like Naturalizer brand, but my dancing is terrific and I leave the people around me and tap jazz swing all the way through the aisles and I'm feeling finally vindicated like I get to show off.

November 15, Alexa

1. Watching swallows dive into a pool of small fish and try to spear them with their beaks. I am either a crow or my cat Linden or both and I try to catch the fish too but my body isn't right.
2. Erika is presenting a new work maybe at Dance in Vancouver (I'm panicking because I thought it was an off year and I'm not presenting anything) and there is a FB post about her work and I know nothing about it. I'm a bad friend. She quotes Donna Haraway in the promo for it and I'm excited but also a little possessive like we had just decided to co-read Haraway in relation to our project but she's using it for something else. How did she read it so fast? Francesca's mom Maureen comments on the post saying that Elisa is working with the text *In the Wake* by Christina Sharpe and that the two of them should talk. I'm not a part of the social media network so I can see the posts but not comment. Again I'm jealous cause this seems like a great conversation that I want to be a part of. Francesca and I get ready to go to the show at the Dance Centre—we arrive and it's sort of like SFU Woodward's and also a giant industrial building like a movie set. We go to the bathroom to pee. We're really cold, there is some confusion about gender and the bathrooms, and I feel scared of being kicked out of it.
3. I teach a really really really bad dance class. My students are sweet but everything goes wrong: my mask keeps falling off and I'm coughing and sneezing a lot. I realize I've been teaching ballet: chasse pas de boure into pirouettes particularly, for almost an hour. I give what I think is a nice image of allowing the pelvis to move with you (not leaving it behind like I did when I was carrying a backpack of heavy groceries the other day) and opening the arms into space like bat wings starting from the middle of the spine to propel you. But then the class is almost over and I haven't given any floorwork. I quickly make a phrase but can't remember it or teach it and all of a sudden I'm wearing a bodysuit and tights and

I don't feel like my sequencing is smooth or fluid and like everyone can see my awkward dancing and the fact that I've lost weight/muscle mass since not dancing during the pandemic. I keep my spirits up and encourage everyone to just "give it a try" and go to play a great song that will save the day—my iPhone screen is fucked. A student who I don't know in real life who is glamorous and Russian with long nails magically fixes my phone but it's too late. I just play the last song I was playing which was a kind of mellow one. The class that's in next is lined up outside. Antonio gives me an apologetic smile and I know we have to end the class.

December 30, Aisha

A plump, raccoon-like fox in a tree amongst squirrels. Very auburn.