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## Dream World

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## DREAM WORLD

The dream I had was someone else's dream not mine.

I merely intercepted it.

Confusion was all about  
the gigantic train station  
And the tall art deco pillars  
capped with contemptuous faces  
stared down on the figures below.  
Cavernous separations disappeared  
into vacant holes and smokey trails  
of diesel fuel left pungent  
reminders of many departures.

A black man in worn winter garb  
like mine chose me.

He shook his ticket in my face  
demanding me to see that he got  
on the right train.

I agreed, not wanting to let him know  
of my own confusion.

Suddenly, with a rush  
a train roared into the station  
And the old man shouted at me  
"Get my ticket punched.  
Get it punched."

I couldn't move through the crush  
of brown-skinned people brought  
about by this feverish scramble.  
I could see the old man's face  
twisted with the intensity of the moment.

"Hurry, hurry or the train will leave."  
His voice, shrill at first,  
ended in a whine.

Great numbers pushed and shoved,  
trying to get around  
to the platform side.

Startled when the engine  
lurched forward and began to move,  
some called out a warning.

Only inches at first, then

gaining ground, it thrust into the crowd  
that stood in its way.

The conductor shouted for me  
to run for the train, but I stood  
frozen and numb.

The old man cried,  
"We're missing it. It's leaving."  
The Northern Limited penetrated the crowd  
who felt the hard steel pushing them aside  
as easily as a ship cleaves the water.

The black man watched the train  
as it gained speed  
fixed glass windows transformed  
into a blur of motion.  
I felt a hurtfulness for the two of us.  
I had betrayed the old man.

He wailed aloud and tears  
pinched out of crinkled eyes.  
"You know how long we'll have  
to wait for the next one?"  
Answering in the next breath...  
"A long, long time."

He looked at me,  
as if I were to blame.  
"Never mind," he said.  
"I seed who was driving that train.  
It was a white man," he said.  
"A white man."

This dream was like telephone lines  
that sometimes get crossed.  
It was meant for someone else.  
Not me.

— *Robert L. Gockman*