

End of Shift

by Bill Yarrow

He fell back against the pillows
inert as a noble gas. I watched
his body weave in and out of
delirium, listened to it suck all
the sleep out of the tired air.
He was losing his fight with
malaria, but you would never
know it from his dreams
which were fierce and fearless
ruddy and red, in which all the
weapons were drawn, all poised
to clash. He was fighting the
bees, who had the heads of
lobsters and bellowed like
kittens in the microwave.
Against him was the Yakuza
in league with the Mariana
Trench. Italian circus clowns
wearing emerald ties bubbled
up from the rarefied deep
and made snipping sounds
as they broke the surface of
the piebald bay. The agricultural fair
was interrupted by an invasion
of shirtless workmen with stalks
of corn growing out of their backs.
His body heaved arrhythmically
to the music of God's lost bones.
Was I watching him die or recover?
I couldn't tell. In ten minutes
I will be done for the day.
Someone else will witness

the wry dénouement. I will be
miles away where the porous
walls are covered in bituminous
cheese, where the scorpion
clocks are drawing the water
for their velveteen candle baths.

