

A Dream of Suffering

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [February 2023](#) issue

*. . . in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode . . .
—The Prelude, Book VI*

Not my suffering. So whose?
I couldn't determine. It was someone pale,
someone entirely lacking
in flesh, or very nearly. However,

his physique—or was it rather
hers?—looked heftier than my own,
though it may have been my own . . .
Whoever's it was, it was evanescing.

Perhaps less a dream of suffering
than scarcity. Accounts of dreams
are dull because words fail them.
So why do I persist? I feared

my paths through these woods all these years—
their flora and trees, their lichened rocks,
wild tracks inscribed on their mud
or snow—would shortly cease to be.

I feared. She feared. He. We.
Or was it fear? Even the mountain
off east was an emblem of dearth.
The light of sense was rapidly dimming,

and soon we found ourselves wanting
to lose ourselves, so we might see it:
the eternal. Nor was it the realm, we thought,
of nothing—no, of indescribable spirit.