**M. A. D.**

Why is it I never know the people in my dreams?

I work in a factory, some nights, peopled

with employees I have never met in the waking

world. We hang out in the break room. We make fun

of the new guy’s incompetence, the boss’s comb-

over. I slap Sam on the back, ask Eunice

if she’s been losing weight. Other times,

I’m at a funeral, crying over dear old Max, offering

my handkerchief to the grieving widow,

Charlene. Crying, for hell’s sake—waking up

to a wet pillow for a dead guy I’ve never met

who volunteered at the Boys and Girls Clubs

in a town I’ve never visited, somewhere

in the Midwest, maybe, which has the name

of a piece of furniture I can’t remember—

yet I’m sobbing at the loss of one of its upstanding

citizens. You’d think my ex-wife would make

an appearance, maybe a bit role as the cotton candy

lady in the dream where my fellow carnies and I

are putting up the Ferris wheel for the carnival’s

three-day run in a town with the name of a dog

breed—Corgi? Chihuahua? I keep expecting

to find my dead mother delivering my newspaper

to a house I’ve never lived in and asking me

if I won’t sit for just a minute and help her

finish the puzzle because Will Shortz is on

a baseball kick and every clue is a dead Yankee.

My psychiatrist is attempting to jump-start

her career by diagnosing it as Middle-aged

Attachment Disorder and has even delivered

a keynote describing how I have subconsciously

severed emotional ties with anyone in the real

world who might cause me pain or grief or

love, which, she explains to the conference

attendees in Davenport, Iowa, is why my REM-

sleep-world has stepped in, and is probably also

why I developed insomnia soon after dream-

Bev in accounting found those suspicious lumps.