

POETRY | FALL 2021

Morphine

By Caitlin Dwyer

He needed sleep. But morphine isn't rest; it's straying,
a forgetful amble into dreams that vanish
and reappear, blotches, ink-blot, little graves

for memories. Would he remember me? I was banished
to the waking world, unable to spool out
golden thread, or drop crumbs, and famished

but unaware, he would wander, pool to black
pool, thinking a drip of stagnant water
mimicked the sound of mama's voice. Cruel

bit of healing. But the opiates did their work, bought
us time. He didn't wake. Maybe he wouldn't,
we began to wonder. He'd wandered too far, got

lost, and though his lungs and heart began to heal, he couldn't
open his eyes. We made bets over his bed —
They're blue! They're brown! They're the color of wet wood

covered in bright green moss! They're the color of lead,
leaking. The drug tangled in his veins, his brain,
and it was almost dread every time he stirred,

began to flex those tiny hands, mangled by IV lines.
I heard it in my dreams, the dispenser beeping
when it ran out, and I'd rant. We sang to him,

wanted to convince him not to sleep forever.
Songs of sunrise, oatmeal, rain; lays of healing;
ballads of creeping lichen, pebbles, skeins, waxwings.

Then, one day, he looked at me and saw.
Blue, I told my husband. Like a Hubble Deep Field
photo, full of gas and pinpricked light.

Caitlin Dwyer is a writer, parent, poet and multimedia journalist. In her poetry, she explores mythology and motherhood. Dwyer studied journalism at the University of Hong Kong and creative writing at the Rainier Writing Workshop. When she's not writing, Dwyer is probably wandering around in the forest or lost in a book.

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