

October 2015 Winning Poem

Pillow Talk

Her body folds like a bad hand as she
Soaks in life from a plastic bag.
Her hair in an affair with gravity -
She tries to sleep, and dreams of sleeping.

I've missed this one. The way her laugh runs
Into sobs when we're left alone.
I've missed her heart's flat hum
When the ward-round comes on a
Monday. How she silently hopes that
No one gets to leave before her.

I remember the news -
The tea and sympathy,
The brave-faced family,
The Doctor's sunken eyes;
I know the late-night cries
Of her father - his need for a God,
Hers for morphine - the
Permanent pumping of drugs.

I know the tube fed through her tiny nose
As if it were a needle.
I know her head threatening to break me,
And her sister's tendency to join us -
Aligned like a hopeful bandage.

I know the jokes-in-jest of coffin-styles,
Funeral songs; Switzerland, Belgium,
And the way her mother writes them down
As science stays silent.
I know the route to surgery,
The art of anesthesia -
How her frail body crumbles back to mine
Soaked in amnesia
Across the patslide.

I know the nervous flick of her toes
As the Doctor explains procedures,
Her thoughts of overdose
As her limbs grow weaker and weaker
But tomorrow, when the nurse says
'You can go home', her eyes will glaze over
As if afraid of honesty.

I don't know if she will always be a memory
The imprint of her bony cheek slowly stretching
From me, but probably



She will be back -
She'll sing to me

With salty tears, she'll tell me I'm
The best damn pillow she's ever smeared
Her bleeding nose into and that if,
No, when, she finds the remedy
For this disease, she promises,
She won't forget me.

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