

Tod Marshall

YES, THERE ARE TIMES

when you hold your breath against a moment's passing—
the dropped glass suspended above cement,
loosed arrow yet to pierce the unknowing target,
a thrown stone just a hole in water
prior to the widening ripple. Put it this way.
A woman sleeps, comforter and sheets
holding her shoulders in a cottony embrace.
Outside the window, sliced melon on a silver tray,
then lemon wedge plunked in the middle
of a pink salmon steak: sunrise.
Outside the window, sparrows rattle like castanets,
then launch themselves to air. Outside the window,
the once again damp daily news
lands with a papery thud in the dew-soaked grass. A woman sleeps,
and you sit at the foot of the bed, pleasantly obsessed
with the thought that a woman sleeps
without worry or care, sleeps toward that moment—
and here there will be those who hem and haw,
shuffle their feet, and look away. Pity their disbelief
because she sleeps toward that moment when the world
will stutter and pause, the lungs' imminent flexing
hitching against their release, raucous heart
holding its persistent beat, reckless sparrows
hovering mid-air, even the plants
bucking against their cosmic spin, as she rises from the comforter and sheets
and stretches. Yes, those muscles; yes, those tendons;
the beloved's body of water and light and bone. Yes,
the long loneliness of night is over,
for she stretches and lets the day begin.