

ROBERT THOMAS

Sleepwalker

One night I found you pumping water
from the neighbors' well. Drinking greedily:
nothing as fresh as the taste of iron. I let you
finish. I watched your unsheathed thirst.
When I woke you, a shudder
like the shadow of a frenulum,
the narrow band that keeps a moth's wings
from tearing apart in flight, crossed your face
before you recognized me, or was it
just after, the moment just after
I spoke your name, when you remembered
it was yours.

In the morning you have bruises,
inky thumbprints on your hips
from bumping the porch grill, but you've never
truly hurt yourself, and I never know
whether to wake you, you seem so serene,
as if walking on water and all the ocean
were yours, not just the kelp
and herring that glint in the sun,
but the deeper layers, eels and rays
in the vertical dusk, even the blind crustaceans
in absolute dark, where light has nothing
to do with what makes you thrive.

And then I witness the awful moment
when the part usurps the whole,
and the vast, porous surface of what you see with
shrinks to the iron chink of an eye.