

jodi johnson

In Bed

They lie side by side, not touching
except where his right arm cradles her neck,
his hand resting across her chest.
Already he grows solid and heavy with sleep;
where his fingers cup her breast their cells
press together so she can't tell his flesh from hers.
She imagines what might happen if he moved:
he carries off her nipple in his palm, and she is left looking
at the cage of her ribs, red and blue veins,
her lungs filling up like balloons.

She hears the first soft drops of rain outside
and remembers what it meant as a child—frogs.
The shallow pond below the house filled with run-off
and she and her sisters hunted the black-eyed
clusters of eggs. When the tadpoles hatched,
she skimmed them up in glass jars and carried them home.
Once, she dropped a jar on the road and watched them
shrink on the pavement, wrinkled and dry as raisins.
Now she thinks of the sperm inside her
beaching themselves on her womb.

She knows that if she dies tonight, her hair
and nails would grow without her for months.
Her heart could beat in another chest, a plastic and metal one
pump in hers. When morning comes she will pull on her body
like an old shoe. But here, in the dark,
she is drawn out thin as a sheet, feels her skin stretch
so something bright can glow through.