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Poem by Jeffrey Erlacher



Sleep Study

Marisol informs me that I stop breathing during sleep
throwing the lungs into a fit

the riotous bleating of life pulling at life
awakens her, frightens her

I say it happens in my roused hours, too
when the stars are present even if difficult to see

the negative scene oxygenates my brain

Sleep Study

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when the inanimate parts the surgeons placed in me
sing the air with ache and disconnection

and the inward stare forgets to respire

when a poem I read thumps the wind from me
and like the printed page

its transmission requires no breath

she feels the need to nudge me
back into being

away from the precipice of
drowning in dreams

she'd like someone to drink her morning coffee with

I think my reptilian brain has never quite worked properly
survival eyes and rote movements couldn't ever fully be trusted

instinct without thought in a world this alive

I like how the light fades slowly
from my closed eyes

forms a green darkness
from concentric stars only I can see

how the moment hypothesizes itself
stitches together a blank quire

how it risks meaning nothing

Marisol knows the limits of breath
how there's only so much outcome in our effort

she remembers the tube down my throat

the nineteen hours of surgery
that did not exist for me until they were gone

I tell her it's taken me the last hundred and fifty years of human history
to find my voice

somewhere between "you'd be dead if not for"
and "sorry for not meaning to say"

not yet a storm, just a depression

that I submit to historicity
in a way that ensures our mutual misunderstanding

how all things move glacially, even my teeth

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blessed are the well-armed
the sound of hearts opening and closing

Art Information

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Jeffrey Erlacher is a writer and educator living in Denver, Colorado. His poetry has recently been published in *The Remembered Arts Journal*, *Midwest Review*, and *Brushfire*. He also wrote a children's novel, *The Little Palace*, forthcoming from Zimbell House.

For more information, visit [Jeffrey Erlacher's website](#) [4] or [@erlacherjeffrey](#) [5] on Twitter.

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