

David Musgrove

Peer into the Dark

Sometimes on summer nights
at my grandfather's house
we'd sit in rocking chairs
in the back yard.
Fireflies would blink
high among the pine trees
and owls would hoot
down by the creek.
Grandfather would hoot back
and tell stories about owls,
ghosts and black cats.
We would laugh, slap mosquitoes
and peer into the dark.
Now he and I wait
out in the blue hallway
while the nurse feeds my grandmother
who tries to keep singing
between mouthfuls of soft food.
When we go back in,
she keeps on singing
and clutches at the brown blanket
with hands like heron feet.
Her eyes are empty.
My grandfather rubs his eyes
- I never thought I'd see her like this.
There is nothing to say,
nothing I can tell him.
I put my hand on his shoulder.
As we leave,
her singing follows us out into the hall.

When I was very young,
so small and unknowing
I would peer into the dark
past the firefly lights in the pines,
trying to see the owls
in the darkness,
but I could only hear them,
calling, calling.