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The Half-Dream of the Dolphin

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Gary Fincke

THE HALF-DREAM OF THE DOLPHIN

The brain of the dolphin shuts down one hemisphere at a time.

My sister tells me the portrait is free,
That she wants, for once, a professional lens
To seal us together; and, in this dream
The blessing of excuses is so muted
I go without debating, early off
The elevator with luminous families
Who clutch coupons, file to floodlights and patter
While I stand and sit, stand and sit, stand and see
Our mother, years dead, climbing the stairs, silent,
Refusing support, and I want to shout,
“Slowly!” or “Go back!” or curse my sister,
The nurse, who believes the dreamed have no disease,
Doesn’t see the picture that must be taken
Is this shot of our mother on the stairs
Repeating soft *nos* to her heart, ignoring
The curfew on her image until she sits
Slack-mouthed and sideways on the mall’s last landing.
Instead of speaking, my sister blinks out.
Instead of acting, I wake to the sleepless
Half of dying, to believing someone
Has sense in the sequel, the lost episode
With the studio downstairs, the descent
Through the sea-chapter of sleep to that depth
Where, just before memory goes dark, it stays
Another moment, convincingly bright.