I

In Rhode Island Hospital’s waiting room,
I leaf through a cosmology magazine.

Too tired to read, but hungry for distraction,
I soak in the photos from the soap opera
playing on the waiting room’s TV,

where a green parrot in a cage hangs from an IV stand
beside the staged bed
of a sleeping women with explosion-colored hair.

She wakes with a slack, amnesic smile,
creating endless new worlds of plot possibility.
What a gift amnesia’s been for soap opera writers,

and my mother
if she doesn’t recognize me when she wakes,
will I choose to see it as second birth or early death?
If the spark,

responsible for clicking on the neuronal lights of consciousness,
swivels right,
and the hippocampus, that great slate roof of identity,
is whipped clean enough to be called brand new.

And Before That

Katie Brunero

This poem is one of the finalists of Anesthesiology’s first annual creative writing competition, The Letheon.


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