

Two Poems

Stephanie A. Hart

Night Sweats

In the night
my child is swallowed by a fish
and she wakes crying for me.
I stroke her sweating head
and hear her story.

There is nothing to be afraid of,
I tell her.
Dream of chocolates in shiny silver wrappers,
like stars.
She sinks into a pattern of breaths.

I close my eyes and see her,
older, standing in an open field
wearing a smart brown hat
over her sweating head, a single feather
on its brim twitches slightly in a sudden breeze.

She clutches a red passport to her chest.
An infant sized birch leaf,
yellow encroaching on green
from each of its serrated edges,
has just fallen at her feet.

And when she opens her mouth,
her scream is the cry of a bright orange safety whistle.

Ultrasound

The slow ticking of the clock
stuck with her through the night
like a ceaseless heartbeat.
She could not close her eyes
for fear the sound would die in her ears,
and her womb

closed on the dark warmth
she could sense but not know.
The scent of the half-peeled orange
she had not been able to eat
soothed her stomach better

than the bottled emollient
her husband had offered her.
It lay in the dark beside the stiff bill
that would be her co-pay and the bar of soap
neatly wrapped in resilient, decorative paper.

In the morning, she would peel away
the picture of daisies, discard the pretty pink
and green wrapper, and slide the heavy bar
through the water passing over her stomach
until the scent of olives and chamomile

rose with the lather.
Then, she would leave the house
without eating
to see if what lay inside her
was still ticking.

