

## Back

In early morning, as you run down the hall  
tumbling over the rug, clutching a stuffed animal,  
I can't help but toss you over my shoulder,  
your fly-away curls blind  
both of us, your squeals sling down  
my ear, the notes peal  
sharper than winter air.

You hop down and toe into the kitchen,  
pleased that I now understand your raised finger,  
your whispered plea *cup of milk, cup of milk.*

You came into our lives like a bird  
flying out of a magician's fiery pot.  
Your wings and rhythms forming somewhere else.  
What did you do with what you left behind?  
Are scarves and jump ropes winding you  
through an antemortal wormhole or tipping point?

For you, the only tip is a head moving forward,  
no going back to a fist in the mouth  
or smacking gums or cells quick  
to divide.

Yet occasionally I go back,  
attempting to piece together  
your essence with the verbal splashes  
I hear now.  
How a blueprint exists for each house  
and a mathematician knows the endlessness of a line.  
Even when you aren't here,  
I still hear footsteps down the hall.

—Mark D. Bennion

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