

Finalist, Poetry

After Hell

By Kim Malinowski

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I should have stayed translating and dreaming,
getting past shame.

I should have skipped all of those medications,
should have tangled instead with metaphor,
skirting defeat.

I, who assumed life would always be bright and bouncy,
always captivating, never saw Hell coming.

Never saw the words fading, the struggle
to coordinate participles and adjectives.

A poet, reading the same word over and over,
pro-nounc-ing it, until it became too tangled
to conjure meaning.

I, who waited. Paced with potential, with desire,
to dance with literature, to capture sequences
and segues, to captivate. And then,
the dictionaries parted like water,
mean-ing, read-ing.

With a fingertip outstretched God made Adam.

I ascended.

Syllables made words and I made poems.