The Brown Moth

When my mother was dying a mosquito
 came to grace the hospital wall with its living.
 My benign observing gave way to umbrage.
 It seemed seditious, that one,
 filled with luminous poison, its needle nose
 poised like the needles in her arm.
 So I killed it, and immediately I was sorry.
 Its mess of legs and fluid refused to scrape off.
 It radiated down the white wallpaper,
 replaced a second of something I could not name.
 I saw my littleness then. I saw me outside a play of patterns.
 And emptiness everywhere.
 (Always before, I’d take the cricket, the wasp
 amidst the pained indulgence of the others
 and release them into the ground of energy on the outside.)
 My mother was a bag of bones and fluids,
 clinging to the same white globe.
 But we do not possess that either. Something
 in the killing negated that position, that,
 and the machines, the bottles, the hums,
 that made me one of them.

Dorie LaRue, PhD
Shreveport, LA

The Gospel

My mother always took for gospel
 whatever it was I said:
 All 3rd graders had to have real lunch boxes—
 I’d toured Europe with an elderly nun—
 and the virgin birth was right as rain.
 At the end, when her blood began to boil
 with those incorrigible white cells,
 and the hospital room was lit with sorrow,
 she’d come in and out of the mist
 like a drunken angel, and I’d tell her how,
 even as we spoke, the nurse
 was prying more Demerol from
 the drug lord,
 that my brother called to say,
 Ma, I love you,
 how heaven was a place dense
 with light and flowers,
 and how God sat by the still waters
 all an eternal day,
 purring like a gorgeous cat.

Dorie LaRue, PhD
Shreveport, LA

Editor’s Note: The author writes, “After my mother’s death, I worked out my grief by writing poetry about her last days and our time together. I teach literature at LSUS.”

Editor’s Note: The author writes, “I was with my mother in her last days as other family members were not available. I fabricated covers for their absence.”

© 2014 American College of Chest Physicians. Reproduction of this article is prohibited without written permission from the American College of Chest Physicians. See online for more details. DOI: 10.1378/chest.13-0866

© 2014 American College of Chest Physicians. Reproduction of this article is prohibited without written permission from the American College of Chest Physicians. See online for more details. DOI: 10.1378/chest.13-1275