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## Night Visits

Jas. Mardis

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*Jas. Mardis*

*I don't know. One night I was tucking her in  
and the next night I was crawling in bed with her . . .  
—an incest father*

NIGHT VISITS

Tonight  
as I break the silent threshold  
of my daughter's doorway  
to plant the final goodnight blessing  
to seek the sureness of her comfort  
to fret away the final  
under-the-bed monsters  
that await her urgent potty sprint

Tonight  
I am counting the steps  
of this night visit  
and measuring the frequency  
of my rising breaths  
from my chest through my mouth  
checking the realm of this daddy ritual  
for the errant call of a fractured wanting

I want to be sure that  
no more than four breaths  
quiver the tiny hairs of her brow  
that no more than  
a lightly mussed shadow  
breaks the stillness of her covers

I want to be certain  
that my steps and the final cradle of her head  
takes no more than



which harrier of children  
    is frozen still  
in his leaning over the head of a child  
waiting for those  
    tiny, prickly stems of eyebrow  
to finally fall back into place

and

I am wondering  
why his bed-lone wife  
    has not come hurrying through the dimly lit hallway  
to see what is  
    taking him  
so long  
    again  
    tonight

## THE REMEMBRANCE

*for Displaced Africans Everywhere*

In my blood  
    there is the rhythm

beating  
    stepping out the steady pace  
of the journey  
    long remembered in my blood

and I can only think of some gritty, sandaled foot  
    black by any measure  
    patting the sand  
beating out the constant flow of stepping  
    churning the already beaten and broken grains  
further  
    into the mist that sand becomes  
along