



photo by Victoria Oster

Instantly

It takes a long time,
it takes many days.
Flurries of movement
follow a long hiatus.
Beside his bed, I crouch,
a beast gauging his stirrings,
looking into the dead-eyed stare of morphine;
smelling its sour vapor.
Holding on to my courage is as hard
as holding onto water.
There are no thunderclaps
but instantly
I know
he will not see another Jack O' Lantern,
another sunrise,
not my face,
not again.

—Ellen McCarthy