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POETRY | SPRING 2020

## Haglund's Deformity

By Elizabeth Lanphier

Waking at night  
I hold my breath.  
I will collect it later,  
from a give-a-penny-take-a-penny  
dish of air.  
If I remember the stars  
are not light shining  
through holes in a painted black ceiling  
like the set of a play, I wonder  
where is the seam of the universe?  
My stomach gets softer, there is a fresh crease  
at the corner of my eye like a no-longer dog-eared page,  
and the Haglund's deformity  
hardening on my heel has a diagnosable name.  
I worry about the hairline  
fracture on my central incisor  
and what would happen if  
I had to live forever  
without a tooth. A smile's  
door off its hinges  
that can't be pulled closed.  
Skin will become  
slack and translucent like  
saran wrap removed and then  
replaced until it no longer  
covers the veins showing through  
the back of a hand  
that as a kid used to be  
stained blue black from the  
pens of friends drawing  
stars and hearts, now constellations  
of sun and liver spots will dot a map  
of purple creeks and tributaries  
that wind toward the heart  
until they one day dry up.  
I want to be held  
in crepuscular hours  
before the drought.

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**Elizabeth Lanphier is a social and political philosopher and medical ethicist. She received her PhD from Vanderbilt University, an MS degree in Narrative Medicine from Columbia University, and was an Ethics Fellow at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. She joins the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Ethics Center faculty in 2020.**

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