

Five Years Ago

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The medical student asked the boy
How often do you feel stiff?
“Now then.” Shrug.
The boy dangled his legs from the seat.
His dark eyes peered curiously through dense lashes.

The student asked the boy
How often do you feel limp?
Shrug. Stare.
The boy dangled his legs from the seat,
Bouncing his swollen feet on the wheelchair pads.
His mother nodded, thin lips curling up
In a pleasant smile that knew to answer for him,
“He has 2–3 tonic, atonic, or myoclonic seizures a week.”

The student asked the mother
When did he start having seizures?
“His first was around five years ago, when he was three.
He had a near-drowning event then
That may have caused his Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome.”
The boy dangled his legs from the
Seat. His legs flung forward,
His torso hurled
Back, his eyes rolled up,
His arms punched
Down. Then all eyes and limbs returned to his body.

Five years ago.
She said calmly, easily.
But there must have been a time
Five years ago when
She was not calm and
It was not easy.

Five years ago.
She had to learn the terms:
Tonic, atonic, myoclonic—
Rhythmic words
For her son’s arrhythmic movements.

Five years ago.
What was transformative,
A mountain of heavy rock
Placed on her and her son
By life or fate or whatever force
It was merely fact now
A fact
She had buried the mountain
And walked on

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