

Firsts

by Kristyn Hardy

There are the firsts just before the hangover
With breath like toxins. There is the first one
After labor and her skin is slick and sweaty.
There are the first ones back and the firsts
Leaving. A first for the school days and the firsts
For the heartbreaks. A first good luck. A first
Goodbye.

Every once in a while, there is the last
First one. The last first of the ones not
Anticipated. The last first on the long
Road of others. Here there will be the firsts
Coming home and the firsts after dinner.
The firsts during the grueling long nights.
The firsts to slow the too-fast years.
The firsts in the noise to usher the quiet.
The firsts after harsh fights and the firsts after
Long flights. The first looks and the first
Waking up.

I imagine some regret that last first. The one
They wouldn't have known to remember.
I imagine they spend their days hoping
To pinpoint the bar or the date or the glass
They drank from. I imagine they cling to it,
Whether they have the specifics or not.
I wonder if they sit in waiting rooms wishing
For one last one, for the first time truly meaning
It. Are there tally marks scratched into the walls
Of their beings, each one a heartbeat of a
Moment that tracks their life with that last first.
Do they plead for another, even if it aches
To add to the count, so long as this time,
They know to prepare. This time
Not for the first, but for the last.