

Devin's Fever

My two-year old on the couch
beneath a purple Winnie-the-Pooh fleece blanket.
"You cut onions?" he asks.

His eyes,
deep within puffed folds of tender skin,
are streaked with red
everywhere but where there is brown iris.
His lids hold pools of tears,
which overflow,
stream down his face
with each blink.
He can not understand these tears,
so he thinks I must be cutting onions.

Beneath the swollen skin,
he no longer looks like my child,
more like the drowned body of a baby
found on the ocean floor.

His eyes hold oceans.

I haven't cut onions.
I can do nothing but watch him,
stroke his wet hair,
cover him more tightly,
and feel him shake with fever cold.

I take his temperature every hour
praying for one less number,
dreading one more.

Lost in the journey of his body,
he now says nothing,
just closes his eyes to cope with the world within.
The heat floods his being as he lays limp and lifeless.
Still on the outside
while wars wage within.

His dance with illness is personal and silent.

His breath is labored,

too deep and strong for one so young.
Raising his head to drink orange juice
takes all the strength he has.

As dusk falls around us on the couch,
we wait until life returns.