

ROBERT COLMAN

SLEEPING

(High Lane)

A burble of lips winnow
as breath gets trapped,
wrestling the lung cage,
the exhale that won't come

until, out of silence, he gasps,
panting, stumbling
a path through the hedge-
row of body,

like his mind now,
traitorous.

TRUST

(Salisbury)

“Can we leave this house now?”
he asks from the window, looking
for familiar landmarks—a car,
a route to safety? Panic.

“It’s a hotel, dad, in Salisbury, UK.
It’s OK, we’ll leave in the morning.”
He’s unconvinced. And thin. I forget
that this is how he’s always been,

the red of his neck, the blue-white sunken
chest, boy-like and smooth.
“Who’s been sleeping here?”
He stares at the crumpled bed.

“You, dad, it’s your bed.
It’s alright, time for sleep.”
And very slowly he climbs
into a thin cocoon of trust.

Twice in the night, I coax him
away from the open window,
try firm but casual, as if
we’ve always had such exchanges,

think of the cathedral lawn,
where, earlier, the spire
aloft in Constable blue,
he’d sighed in awe.