

SARAH HANNAH

The Linen Closet

Oh, the linen closet, imperial
 Ladder of shelves, gold towels glowing
 With repose, night creams pearled, in pots,
 Their risen oils yellowed at the rims,
 Tubed salves, perfumed proteins.

Tall and narrow, narrow and deep,
 The linen closet of worry and care!
 On the highest shelves, the recondite liquids
 In brown, bottled sternly: Peroxide,
 Witch Hazel, and the dread purgative,

Ipecac. You might have died or been renewed,
 Clavicles dewed by that arched-back soap,
 Inimitably scented, cuts bridged by red
 Tinctures, muscles slackened in the heating pad's
 Green mosses. But no matter the potion

You could not ignore the space
 At the back, the absolute black
 In the bowels of the shelves, beyond the patch
 And blanch of gauze, the catch of clots—
 That unflagging question (past cure)

No tonic or robe could appease,
 No meter or prodding inspection
 Could probe—you could not quite make it out,
 And you would not forget it.

The recent unexpected death of the talented young poet Sarah Hannah has shocked and deeply saddened the US poetry world. Her first book *Longing Distance* (Tupelo Press), in which the poem reprinted above appeared, earned much admiration from leading poets, and was a semi-finalist for the Yale Younger Poets Prize. Her second—and final—book, *Inflorescence*, will be published in the autumn. A fuller appreciation will appear in a later issue.

—Eva Salzman