

Sleep Hygiene

Category: Poems

written by Daniel Becker | June 25, 2010

Daniel Becker

Outline the night and all its objects
in black magic marker.

The world through closed eyes
needs texture
the way tires need tread,
brains need wrinkles, and hypnosis
needs the power of suggestion—
traction, surface area, and control
might also apply to a cat
buried alive underneath the sheets;
if so, don't forget the one on top.

Stay up for several nights before
the night you plan to sleep.

Oil the ceiling fan.

True or false: the bladder
is on a separate circuit?

Don't eat in bed, especially chips.

Snoring + sleep apnea + restless legs
+ hemorrhoids + lumbago =

the human condition. The winter itch
as well would be unfair.

Use pillows to solve or suppress all of the above,
a pillow shaped like the horizon
or the supine profile of your partner, or even better
a partner who won't mind being used as a pillow—
together you become the mountains and their clouds,
between the two of you a hidden canyon,
lost in your slopes there are deep limestone caves,
hot springs, the occasional tremor
of tectonic plates and knees.

About the poet:

Daniel Becker practices and teaches general internal medicine (an endangered specialty) at the University of Virginia School of Medicine, where he also directs the Center for Biomedical Ethics and Humanities and edits the online journal [Hospital Drive](#).

About the poem:

“This poem is an exercise in nonlinear thinking, an attempt to see where ‘sleep hygiene’ would lead. Around here, most roads lead to or away from the Blue Ridge Mountains.”

Poetry editors:

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro