

## Sleep Paralysis

by Mitchell Solomon

as always,  
suddenly,  
falling,  
a decline  
accelerating into the vacant frame beneath the blanket  
purchased at the flightless bird exhibit. Now,

awake. Fear, shock—once again  
comprehension that dreams will be stolen  
by an affair with looming slumber—  
recognition of the saliva trail along my chin fades  
    as I lay still  
this brain, now tired and in need  
of rest. Force  
a dream

colorful birds with whom I would play  
and fly and watch as they grew and flourished,  
each emerging fractaled from the  
previous, extending one lanky black leg,  
the other emanating from the  
bulbous orange-red-citrus frame of its deciseconds-older twin whose  
budding now complete, joins its elder siblings  
off in the distance to mate and age  
beyond time  
    glacial, its deception  
entombs the seasons' seamless  
arrivals; too late  
nurtured birds now atrophied,  
beaks so heavy as to prevent the slightest  
lift of the head. They rest, back-along-ground, always  
choosing to face the sky  
they abandoned. Ruffled feathers cover  
outstretched wings, once bright forearms  
stained with dust; they watch braided clouds pass overhead,

struggling to retake control,  
on my chest,  
falling, waking.