

First Job

She
was sleeping with
the Donald Duck night light
on a little girl scared of the dark.

Curled up in an
animal print blanket,
one leg of her footed pink sleeper uncovered
relaxed in sleep.

She awoke and smiled at
my plastic Bozo mask,
the night light dotting her eyes.

She watched me, choking silently,
a single tear sliding to her ear
while I
listening to her final breath wheeze out
made my first one thousand dollars,
trying ever so gently not to leave bruises on her neck.

— Deana S. Marrs