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There Is No Word
By Alina Cantero

There is no word to describe the loneliness of a child,
particularly a little girl, frightened to slumber.

Left alone in her room
with the doors unlocked and the windows unlatched.

Any moment someone could
 intrude into her house
even worse her room, unannounced
 peeking at her through the window

As she hides underneath the blanket not for warmth but refuge.

Which is too bad, because that is the word
I would like to use to describe,

 Standing in a room full of strangers,

Where one unproblematic suggestion,
one screech of her name from an unfamiliar voice

could force her deeper
 into the heart of instability,

 Leaving her wishing to return
 to the fondness and conversance
of her bed.

Which is too bad, because that is the word
I would like to use to describe

 The gripping of her chest

When the state of panic finally sets in
Flustered throughout her body

Leaving her wishing to escape,
 to leave the stage and return to her cave.

But there is no such word

to describe a secluded child

terrified to dream,
whose world contains no protection
other than the space between her bed and the light switch.