



When We Read in Bed

Erin Morrissey



it happened every night for nine years
in dusty lamplight and tired-slurred words
it happened curled into my mother
on a strangely pale orange paisley bedspread
in a cave of red that was soft and deep and
dim

this was how I learned to read,
my finger dragged across tree and that and
blue
my mother's voice high and low and drooping
she fell asleep on the first page and I'd drag
her finger across words, too

when the reading fell only into my head
and the dozens of voices stopped
I don't remember minding

but a phone line last night told a new story:
of spilling into a basket of peaches,
of Spanish beaches and of stomped-on pecans

and it was not the last time

last night and the week before and tomorrow
someone new
drags my finger across rolling poems and
pillowed delights
and I'm merry-go-rounding in an orange
sweater now,
because someone I love is reading to me again

the books are getting longer and the text is
getting smaller
and my eyes are drooping but remember:

this is how you fall in love:
with the dragging of fingers and broken-open
smiles
curled into your mother's womb or nine hours
of ocean
rolling over words under blankets with
drooping eyes.