**Sound Waves**

Amanda Leal

Weeks after having COVID, the silence filling my left ear

like the ocean, I enter the audiologist’s office with my son,

a little closet at the end of the hallway, the two chairs

adjacent to a soundproof box, the size of a walk-in cooler.

Burgundy leads drape from a hook in the box, like nerve endings

dangling to the floor, as the audiologist opens the heavy door,

and I step into the igloo with a single seat,

bundled cords and a headpiece hung over the backrest,

as though it is an execution chair. I sit alongside the yellowed

Plexiglass window by the audiologist, my son settling in the seat

across from me, his little hands gripping

the handle of his tablet, watching me in the box

that neither of us knew existed, his curls seeming to darken

in the dim light of the office, his hips too narrow to fill

the mahogany arms of the chair, his sandals

inches above the floor, his eyes wide. I lean

to the side until he disappears, the steel door sealing,

as I feel gratitude for the first time, that it is my hearing

to go, and not my eyes. The speaker crackles to life

and the audiologist intones words that I must repeat:

*Flower.* Flower. *Third.* Third. *Death.* Death.

I imagine my son on the other side, the tablet

dark in his hands, the audiologist with yellow hair,

white teeth the size of turnips, shooting him smiles

as he looks to the ground, the open air beneath

his feet, swinging his legs back and forth.

I repeat the words quickly, as though building a ladder

out of the tomb, to the world of the hearing, where I wonder

if I will ever hear my son’s voice clearly again.

When the door opens, he sits up in the chair, keen,

eyebrows raised, the tablet tumbling to the floor

as he leans forward. The audiologist guides me

down from the lip of the box, and tells me

to expect a call with results. As I push my fingers

through my son’s curls, I know that we will be okay,

his hands pushing under my shirt out of habit, hopping

on the concrete floor in excitement, the vibrations

of his happiness like sound waves in my sneakers.