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The Uppermost Affliction

Before weary, which spends the spirit,
and drowsy, a drunk

who comes and goes,
before tired and before fatigue, sleepy

is the uppermost affliction.
It unfurls a flytrap with warm wax
up its sleeve—

suspending ambitions like bulbs
set flickering in the Pyrenees.

The blur exults in the loss of the linear;
it reveals that the bed points

each soft corner south, where, yea,
though you walk
through the volley of bees,

you've gone low-voltage, stumbling
errant across centuries, through

landscapes of sheep and poppy seeds
that dim the vision, till your own name

swells with mystery. At the desk
you lean, a dethroned icon
of wide-awake, body

weak as a sheet of paper,
nodding head the paperweight.

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Sarah J. Sloat grew up in New Jersey and now lives in Germany, where she works in news. Sarah's poems have appeared in *Linebreak*, *Parcel*, and *Court Green*. Her chapbook *Inksuite* is available from Dancing Girl Press, and another, *Homebodies*, was published in 2012 by Hyacinth Girl Press.