

The Bones of Her Back

are ill-maintained, mended in a thousand broken places. When they are pulled from the upholstery and released weightless into the air circulating in the belly of the aircraft, the mother thinks of her babies. Sudden, buoyant, detached. Like her bones. She thinks of her babies as grown-ups with spouses, with kids in arms, like her co-passengers, except they're drained white, ghostly, at this moment. Thinks of the white strips of antidepressant tablets she must administer to Sam when she got home, *if* she did get home, while the plane plummets, free-falling metal behemoth, deaf to prayers, immune to panic screams. In twenty seconds, she revisits her mother, dances in her two-piece with the Italian on a one-off fling, family vacations, first love, hate for the Victor Party, major and minor mishaps, betrayals. Ploughs her emotions into memories that have been like raisins drying in the sun, festering sore. In another ten, she returns home to Sam rolling his wheelchair to the door and waiting. She pictures herself stopping to survey her flower bed, the herbs she planted during the last rains swaying in delicious solitude, and her cat whining. As the huge weightlessness of them takes a rhythm, tangoes with the void like a couple at Rio de La Plata, she devours the delicious melody of sheer nothingness, like an autumn leaf in the wind. Towards the end of her exhalation, she is upon a bed of magnolia, in and out of silent acquiescence, when she realizes her body is heavy again, deep and full, anchored in ether, and the bones of her back are darting forward.