ANNIE WOODFORD

Extended Family Love Song

Let’s not talk about the shortness of breath, the persistent cough, the clot of blood in the drain, the tendency to fall asleep while taking off your shoes (that’s how my aunt said she knew my uncle was dying: she found him sleeping in his armchair, Red Wings half-unlaced). No, let’s talk about drinking cheap bourbon & Mello Yello on brackish ice, playing Rook, our babies’ silken shoulder blades. How good it felt to take one week off in Myrtle Beach & suck hard on a Doral to get the cherry going before holding it to the fuse of a Roman candle. To buy five Roman candles. Let’s talk about the way our beloved’s hair curled or fell across our hands. Let’s talk about the belly’s delicate C-section scar & sharpening the blades for the lawn mower. Let’s talk about Mel Brooks & the high dive & restringing your father-in-law’s guitar. How his hands shook. & a thousand Sunday evenings in front of the TV, the work week as devotion, & the exhaustion at the end of a day begun before dawn, your feet feeling it most as you ease...
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them, wings of bone
& burning, out
of your shoes.