Altitude 32,000

and raindrops batter plexiglass.

Your wrists are bound

with impalpable twine to the armrests –

twig-fingers crimped around quiet

like arachnids suspended

from umbra ceilings.

Our stomachs levitate.

I realize it’s the first time in three years

I’ve witnessed your impending ghost

spin nightmares into mortar

petrifying on the rings of your irises,

the insides trapped and melting,

closed-in like coffins.

Your pleated brows emerge

from hibernation, a three-year winter,

and I recall Asheville, how you seemed to rust

with birch leaves atop the trail last fall –

sneaker tips kissing air cured in turkey legs

and cranberry pus wafting up the precipice

from doll houses.

You were glazed porcelain,

and I had to fold you in

like an envelope I couldn’t bring myself

to open

while our lungs unfurled warmth,

mine rolling dandelion puffs

off a clenched tongue,

dispersing

        seeded

  prayers

         that

  failed

                          to

         thaw

                              November...

we watched seconds mound

like iced loam at our toes

until my tremors subsided enough

to continue.

I witness your pupils liquefy,

swirls of sable in the basin’s circular frame,

the scythe like an oar churning whirlpools.

And you’re mute asking,

the liquid pooling, teeth quivering

like tight cello strings

gilding pressured air into music:

*Are we going to be okay?*

Turbulence exudes slugs of mucus

and deafening shrills from a newborn -

shakes anxiety like pennies

from the passengers but yours I cull,

latch in my cranium like gold.

The plane dips, careens over wind sockets

and for the first time in a while,

I know.