

WHITE

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

I close my eyes, see the hair. Plastered in a swirl of thalo blue, too short and black to be mine, too long to fall from the brush. I remember tapping ash from my Camel, wondering who trespassed my studio. I reached for that hair and my arm went numb, the air zagged white, and out the window fog huddled grey over the sound. I crumpled on the paint-spattered floor, counting cigarettes and brushes rolled under the easel, the shadows passing.

Now the world is blank canvas — the shades open, the sun pours in, harsh titanium. The television murmurs too low to hear, too loud to think. Nurses turn me, rub my pale unfeeling feet and arms and backside, and swaddle me again in brilliant sheets.

My son comes. I smile but he cannot see it. No one can. He sits by the bed and cradles my hand, stroking the parchment that stitches me together the way the nurses do, but longer, with smaller, tighter circles. He talks to fill in the space, more than he ever talked to me before, and I blink fast. A single tear squeezes past, and I wish I could feel it slide hot and wet down my cheek. His hand reaches. “Oh Mom” he says, and peters out of words, my poet son. I close my eyes, see the hair.

