

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.