

Life Flight

Rachael Peckham

The most dangerous flying there is, my younger brother says—and when there’s weather, how’d you like to be the one to make *that* call? To go or not. When somebody’s life is on the line? And end up risking your own in the process? *No thanks*. It’s Memorial Day and we are outside grilling chops and staring up at two AirCare helicopters descending, making the wind chimes shudder, in a cornfield—one of ours maybe a hundred yards away. *You know where the sheep barns used to be*—he knows full well I don’t—*you know where the road stretches flat? That place*. Where two teenagers crashed maybe thirty minutes ago, racing their cars, tag-touching each other. The theories gain speed when the second chopper gallops overhead. *Oh, God, I bet they hit a buggy*. Dad calls Dorothy, the neighbor lady. Other neighbors stop by after garage sales and parades have ended with offerings of friendship bread and first-hand accounts of the car that didn’t crash, just kept on going—didn’t even slow down, going a hundred when the one slid off the road or something, and the ditch is deep there. It popped the back end of the car up, flipping over and over in the field. (I did a hundred once. On I-69 coming home from a date and always late for curfew, I pushed the needle until ninety didn’t feel *that* much faster, so ninety-five mustn’t, either—and so on for at least a mile with no thought of a deer, a cop, a drunk, until my foot grew tired of pressing down—that’s all.) Later, when the barricades are gone, we’ll drive by the site, trace the skid marks with our eyes to the spot in the ditch where they did a nose dive and flipped and flipped—but you wouldn’t know it from looking at the field, so freshly tilled, the dirt falling in our footprints the second we leave them.

Rachael Peckham’s chapbook of prose poems, *Muck Fire*, won the 2010 Robert Watson Poetry Award from Spring Garden Press. Her essay “Apple, Daydream, Memory” received a notable mention in the 2012 *Best American Essays*. Peckham teaches Creative Writing at Marshall University in Huntington, West Virginia.