

RUTH MADIEVSKY

Flight

John's father's white blood cells are leaving him the way people leave an apartment that's on fire. It's summer. John smokes on our friend's patio while his father's body runs out of ways to be a body, which is to say, the wind is studying the shape of him. I wonder how many hawks it would take to lift his father to the top of the mountain we are facing, to make him and his cancer strike some deal, some custody agreement. Cancer can have the liver, but he gets the lungs and the air inside them. If cancer demands bone, let him keep the blood and most of what it touches. Around us, the mosquitoes look hungry. Our arms prickle from their mouths or from the thought of their mouths. *All living is a negotiation*, John says to his cigarette. *Pretending otherwise is like saying the body enters the world, when it's the other way around.*