

Lumbar Puncture

I laugh while they do the puncture,
keeping up a steady stream of one-liners:
“Whiskey is my preferred pain killer” and
“don’t worry, if it hurts, you’ll know--
The whole place will know.”
I’m good at entertaining.

Relax, the doctor says.
Chris, the nurse, has her hands on me.
They are warm. I think of my dog at the vet’s,
her eyes darting, frantic. I am all animal, knees to chest.
The doctor counts my vertebrae. I think of spare ribs,
I think of making a joke.

Chris shows me the four vials of spinal fluid.
Clear, like water, but full of meaning
some bio-magician will decipher, predicting my future:
a gradual loss of muscle control, wheelchairs,
and being fed like a child, or not—
just some anomaly in the brain,
this shadow, this lesion.

My husband reads an article, “The End of Physics?”
I glance at it, eyes glazing. The world is full of mysteries
I do not understand. I understand his passion,
but I don’t care where the atoms are in the box.
Do you feel the energy? my PT says,
And I do. I feel the colors of my chakras;
sunlight makes sense to me,
dogs wrestling in it.

The part of my brain with the shadow on it
houses memory, language, emotions,
each function a Tarot card waiting to be turned.
Will I learn to understand physics without them?
St. Augustine had a dream. In it a small boy
tried to empty the ocean into his bucket.
The dream, the saint said, was a metaphor
for trying to grasp God with our minds.

The world is full
of mysteries.

The world is full.