

A Hundred and Then None

Last night a man was yelling in the parking lot as I walked to my car. I don't know what he said, but it sounded like my name, like my stepfather when he called me four Christmases ago from an unknown number, said he loved me like a daughter as if he'd never touched me like a lover. I was nine. He wasn't asleep but pretending, his large hairy arms locked around my frame, my body accustomed only to my mother's hairless arms in those early years of begging to be close to my creator. Yesterday, the man I'm seeing used the words *love* and *you* in the same sentence. I can tell summer is coming because I am afraid. There are pills. Will I be a good mother? I can't forgive her soft harm. In my family, the women believe in powder under the arms, under the breasts. Today I hold three pills in my palm where I once held more than a hundred and then none at all.