

How You Hold

By Liza Patrick

On your last night of vacation in Mexico,
you wake to your son calling at 3:00AM
and you go out on the balcony, phone to ear,
at the all-inclusive resort, while the moon
pulls the waves toward the beach below
and you tug your cotton nightgown
over your bare goose-bumped legs.

And you listen with every bone in your body
while he spills out his sorrow and shame
and you know how hard it is for him
to keep wanting to live on this sad earth

You answer the phone even though you're tired
and you just read a terrible thing about a young man
and it's clear this trip won't save your marriage.

And you know how your voice is supposed to sound,
lifting up on the vowels,
and you beg yourself not to flatten too far,
even as you hear your voice lilting "hello?"

And you channel every good bit
of your own blessed mother's memory
and you hold and you hold.
How you hold.