

Towards the End

Towards the end, my mother used to say
"I can't believe I'm going to die in *Florida*, of all places"
Over and over
Like a mantra.

Then she would light a cigarette
And look across the kitchen at the back screen door
Crisscrossed by the waving shadows of bougainvillea,
And say again,
With a snort
"Florida."
And she would drag on the cigarette and cup her chin in her hand
And push her glasses up onto her head to catch the wisps of hair from her temples
And look sorrowfully at that bright screen door with its puppet show of dancing branches.

I think
In retrospect
That this habit of hers wasn't really about Florida at all.
It was about *potentialities* --
As in:
"At the time I was born, I might have died anywhere on earth
And at some point
When my back was turned
All other possibilities melted away until only one was left."
And that one possibility just happened to be
a particular house,
on a particular cul-de-sac
in a particular suburb
of Jacksonville.

-

It's a subtle and terrible thing, the way the past
Dangles its scythe hand in front of us
And plows ever-deepening furrows into the future.

© Alex Burtzos, www.alexburtzosmusic.com. All rights reserved.

Reproduction is illegal.