

## BARBARA LAWRENCE

*After the Swim*, 2014  
Oil on canvas, 30 x 36 in



COURTESY: THE ARTIST

## CODY PEACE ADAMS Spin the Bottle

Asher Muncy snapped awake at Gate 38 of the San Francisco International Airport, irritated at drowsing off before his flight. Falling asleep during air travel was an exact science for him and any premature slip of the eyelids could sabotage the whole affair. He removed the bottle of expired medication from his pocket: *Dana Muncy, take one tablet before bed as needed; do not operate heavy machinery; do not ingest alcohol; use care until you become familiar.* It had been impossible to tell as he sorted through his mother's belongings what belonged to Dana and what to Deborah. In their later years, after consolidating their households, the twins had taken to sharing absolutely everything: their clothing, their money, their bed, and, as Asher suspected, even the single toothbrush on premises. The only item he could definitively attribute to his mother was this bottle of sleeping pills, and even that she had shared with her sister at the end. He had left the rest of the detritus to his cousin and an eventual estate sale.

Asher sat facing the gate to avoid looking at the clusters of travelers shuffling along the arc of the terminal concourse. People in airports had a strange propensity for seeking eye contact with strangers, only to accelerate away, wheeled luggage nipping at their heels. Airport faces titillated the periphery of Asher's vision with shadowy memories of classmates he had distantly hated in high school. And he always had to look, to make sure it was only an illusion. It was better to stare through the windows at the taxiing planes, reminiscent of horses being stabled for the night.

11:11 p.m. winked out on the digital banner above the Delta check-in attendants, replaced by *CANCELED*. Like prairie dogs signaling the approach of a predator, half-dozing heads popped up around him, registering squawks of disapproval: "Can you believe that?" "Ah, shit!" "Fuck me." This communal aggravation goaded a dispirited stampede to the gate counter. Asher did not rise from his plastic seat. Old women, backpacking couples, young mothers, and a variety of ageless professional men in cheap slacks and tucked-in shirts crowded in front of the Delta employees, muttering predictable, half-hearted opprobrium. Asher watched as the older gentleman in charge of the desk hushed the mob by speaking over it into his intercom receiver.