Running on Empty
by Macha Lopez

Another look by the window.
I see the car, down there. Its engine *is* already running.
I *know*, yet I press *Start* on the key fob *again*.
Twice.

Breathe in.
"Core power: 99%".
Breathe out.

What if…?
This time, I watch my thumb, pressing *Start* again.
The engine *must* be running. Otherwise…

Breathe in.
Breathe out.

I recite the list.
Unplug.
Exit lab.
Run to car.
Plug back in.
Escape.

A chirp.
"100%".
Showtime.

I pull at the cable in my chest, and the port breaks free.
My heart flutters, imperceptible palpitation.

I run.

"99%".
"98%".

No turning back now.

Written for the 2023 100-word NYC Midnight Challenge
Assigned genre: Thriller
Assigned word: "list"
Assigned action: charging an electronic device