

Four

I

Next time notice. Waiting rooms
vibrate. Everyone feels it, I do;
and the old man does, and the mother with daughters leaning
to see the magazine, they do; and the admins at the big desk,
stingy with flinty kindnesses, they feel it
from behind folders stacked like a Dr. Suess drawing.
Something is coming up from under, or from the pages,
or through the walls, or the TV blare or the scans on a screen, or bearing
down from above. I put the magazine down.
Something. Maybe from within.
My name is called.
Definitely from within.

II

See breasts look pretty with arms stretched
above the head that way. I have a photograph.
I'm in a tub reaching for someone. Still life
with a glass of champagne. A bottle in a bucket on the bathmat.
There is also a wet mirror and a reflection blurred and sliding: breasts, arms, someone, a glass of
champagne and a bottle in a bucket on the bathmat.
Below the surface my body, already under siege.
I study the snapshot for signs of ragtag troops, mustering and dividing
in a muggy climate of estrogen and vanity.
I was too proud, too clever, too sure, godless.
I undid one button too many, too many times.
I admit, I loved these things: Sex, booze, beef, butter, sunlight.

III

Oh, look. Remember that day? That dog loved the snow.
It snowed and snowed and snowed.
The earth rumbled with plows pushing through streets.
For hours, we bent, hoisted and heaved to clear a path. We joked and laughed.
Close to the threshold I noticed gold skeins on the snow surface,
my hair there on a drift, flashing like once when something alive
shimmered between my feet as I stood
laughing in the ocean with a child on my hip who had
pulled my swimsuit aside and showed my breast to the crowd.
My own mother sat up the beach, and laughed too.

IV

I take a trip I'm not ready for. Within half a day,
I lose my reading glasses and city sunglasses.
I search and grieve under a tropical sun. Twenty-four hours later,
it is impossible to believe I have ever been anything but barefoot and topless.
I drink gold rum, my skin is gold, my wayward hair is gold.
I am in charge. I go to the edge
and command the tide and the sun to stay so I can step in
and swim my best stroke,
the breast stroke, and I put palms together at my chest
like prayer, and reach ahead and pull back my arms in wide, heart-shaped arcs,
and the surface breaks, the sea is behind me, I push the sea away,
and my once feet flash like fish past the feet of the laughing mother
whose bare breasts point to where there is no tide, no sun, no sea, no reflection,
nothing above or below the surface, just one color and that is light
and all the body is gone gold
and all the body is gone light
and all the body is gone within.