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The Wig

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The Wig

1.
Melanie who lost her hair
because of a stone
in her uterus,
Melanie wears a wig today.

I see her fumble with it,
fuss with the back wisps,
push down the nested skull,
the soft scalp of skin.

I wonder, will she lose it all?
Black scraps of eyebrows,
sharp fur of her legs,
a dark stream like a fall of pine needles.

Will it be a gradual loosening, soft tufts clinging
to the imprint of her sleep on the pillow,
eyelashes like tea leaves
in her morning cup?

Or will she awaken shorn
bare, red flesh soft,
re-born infant
over woman bones.

2.
On television tonight, a circus.
I watch a woman
in a chocolate brown bodysuit
hang by her hair

above the mezzanine,
propelled by the muscle's man's
tug on a fat rope.
More than the girl

who holds on with her teeth,
more than the balancing
of toe and wire,
this act terrifies us.

How will the strands of our brittleness,
which we tear at and burn and flatten and curl,
which we flick like a waterfall
into our lovers' eyes,

how will our hair hold us?

3.

Inside her velvet cave the cyst grew
to the size of a grapefruit,
swelling the skin behind her navel,
swallowing her eggs as if black caviar.

I wonder if she got to see it when they took it out,
and if it was pretty to look at,
like a geode's crystalline interior,
sticky cells glistening and holy.

Can she see herself
in it, like a crystal ball?
Like I see in her the future
thinning,
waning bare, coming
close.

—Alison Stine '00