

Hearing about it, I have nightmares
in which I stumble across a rib-cage
still wearing a backless hospital gown.

The Schnebbley boy's find
was a partial skeleton like the one
hanging in my father's office closet,

by which he learned anatomy.
A kidney floats in a bottle on my dad's desk.
A jar of liquid cocaine lies in his little black bag,

for setting nose fractures. My father leaves
the lights on, the door ajar, so his patients
cannot trap him in their comedies.

Bliss

I trace my past life through hairdos: ringlets,
pigtails, finger waves, straightened-on-juice-cans,
bouffant, French braids, and—worst—sausage rolls
flying back from my face like ditsy, exuberant wings.

At fifty-eight, I lie gingerly on a satin pillowcase—
must not muss my baked-under-the-dryer curls—
dreading the day I start swaddling my head in a lacy
Mother Hubbard cap, like my mother always wore to bed.

Across asparagus and Metamucil, my husband pores
over my crow's feet and droopy lids, pondering, "Who is
that old woman?" He blurts, "Should I wear a hat?
An orange feather stuck in the band of a brown fedora?"

One partner's memory slips away like quicksilver. For
another month or so, we're still one flesh, our bedsheets
worn smooth through a long, tempestuous marriage. After
that, one of us lies awake, trying to memorize the stages of grief.