

## Cold speculum

I anchor my eyes away from him, mooring myself in the blue  
of a rubber glove balled deep in the rubbish bin. Knees open,

all anticipation, but still shocked by the chill of prising.  
Newly aware of all the acts of care I never notice

until they're missing: prongs warmed in a latex-clad hand  
or a light brush of inner thigh in vectored warning,

the way one would rest a courteous hand on a mare's rump  
so as not to startle when manoeuvring behind her.

Does he think I won't kick? Is it because he's Catholic, or something?  
Trying not to gentle me as though any implication of tenderness

could make this barely lubricated glowstick somehow sexy?  
Even though it's so far from those short weeks ago with you

when we smelled the rain before we could see it, and  
heady petrichor rose while a distant cloud unspooled

its load over the alpine fault. That rough tectonic fuck  
plates grinding up and down the islands, all upthrust and subduction,

plus us unregistered by the Richter scale, quaking  
our campground while the sea sucked off the rocks

and the sky bloomed just like the suckled bruise  
on a neck, or all my credible fears, blossoming

under my belly to cast roots there, bulbous  
as pickling onions, marinating a promise

neither intended to keep. Hence this more perfunctory affair.  
You: God-knows-where. Me: gritting my teeth to dilation

under a roof gridded with tiles like an upturned swimming pool.  
I wish we could do this outside. I would rather look up at the sky

and its well-aerated blue so contrary to drowning, although  
I would still be holding my breath

wishing I could get engulfed in something  
rather than doing all the damn engulfing.