

A large white sculpture of a bird in flight is mounted on a textured blue wall. The bird's wings are spread wide, and its long neck is extended. A dark shadow of the bird is cast onto the floor below, which is made of dark tiles. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the texture of the wall and the form of the sculpture.

Breast exam

*And now we are going to drop
the front of your gown.*

Silently, she complies,
but her eyes fix upon
some light that shines
behind us, over our heads.
Her chin aligns with the tile floor,
her neck becomes a stone column.

The doctor continues small talk—
Sunday bread baking,
slapstick antics of two young
nephews,
Labor Day lake swimming,
the resilience of succulents—

as her undulating fingers search
our patient's drooping breasts
and soft, unshaven underarms
for small stones hidden deep.

Our patient is now a lady of marble,
harder than anything we can palpate.
Closing her eyes, she takes
the softer things to a place
our prying fingers cannot reach.

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Photo by Robert Kato.