

Disappear

"I want to disappear."
She sat there—leaning against the wall
Knees hugged up to her chest.

"I know," I thought,
It is obvious
She does not eat.

The growth curve plummets
Weight down, down, down
It drops
There is nothing to stop the fall.

Scars stripe the left calf
A right-handed assailant
Cutting her own skin
The knife—taken from the kitchen
Usually used to cut apples, onions.

She does not eat
The small scars
Hide big pain.

Baggy sweatpants hide the skeleton
As she bends forward for me to check how straight the spine
is
The bones jut out
Close to the surface.

"I will do it slowly"
She whispers
Not really to me
Am I really even there in the room?

The room is so bare
Only the examining table
Covered with thin, crinkly paper
That tears too easily
An empty counter, walls with scratches

No color, no joy
The air is sucked out of it.

I toss a few more words into the space
So inadequate, so flimsy
I am trying to convey
"You matter,
You are a beautiful, blessed daughter of the world
No one else has your thoughts,
Your laugh, your cry
You and your pain are sacred."

But her guard was pulled up like a tight blanket
In the empty, empty room
There was no bridge between us.

"I will be under the radar," she says,
"So they think I am consenting to treatment,
but I will not eat."

And gradually
I will be
gone.

—Andrea Reilly, MD