

## Karin Gray

### Small Coin

She stands next to the bargain beef  
arm outstretched  
her hand grasps a plastic bag,  
liquid drips onto the floor.

Inside round  
is on sale this week.

I know her.  
The small coin of parenting  
links us. She gives  
my daughter a ride, sometimes.  
We talk -- concerts, school, weather. I don't mention  
the bandages around her head.

Wrapped in its membranes  
her brain, like mine, is a pleated mass  
of greyish-white tissue that weighs  
almost three pounds -- except she has a tumour,  
an extra two ounces, packed in her skull.

Perhaps it is this small golf ball of meat  
that rewrites her Saturday morning  
supermarket script.

Between the canned soups and  
bulk mints she says I thought we would be friends.  
The words  
taste of stones and I have no reply.

She selects a chocolate bar and I pick  
two cans of soup. As she leaves  
for the checkout, her bag of meat leaks  
a trail of blood.