

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.