

1.

the swollen belly of my hard-boiled egg is cracked I realize
as I pull it from my purse

*the last time I carried an egg like this
was junior high . . .*

we were each assigned a “little friend”
in health class
as practice for having children

I remember breaking mine
a couple days into it
can’t recall how many marks I lost
though the number of stares too many to count

this poor creature
that was left with me
in my judgement for a suitable sitter

now it’s four months before marriage
I am carrying home this hard-boiled egg
without a face
and still warm from the pot

we purposely boiled one extra
while preparing a school lunch
for Patrick’s daughter
forty minutes before midnight

he rolled it up and down my spine
as I slipped on yellowed Adidas
to go home
teasing
with a quick speck of heat

2.
didn't realize my body had vacancies
until illness moved in
with its mother and stepsons
and cousin's friend's daughters
should all be evicted the noises they make

will have to put in new floors
patch up scarred walls

need to reclaim lost space
renovate interiors with tranquil colours
and fabrics that hug you into their cushions

give doors shiny brass knobs
that like to be opened
make curtains to decorate windows

let the sun breathe
into me

3.
Thursday sometime after five
Patrick clings to me
fetal-like
on the hospital bed
a Kleenex box propped within reach
of both of our hands

this is the first time he ever lets me
see him cry
I stroke his temple
as he tells me he's sad
because we can't make our own babies

I assure him
that I'd do anything
for another version of him

we should be hopeful
since there will probably be
some artificial uteruses in five years
you never know with those scientists . . .

I tell him . . .

we can make it through anything now . . .

4.
it's hard
washing wounds

being brave enough
to peel back gauze

and allow shower to stream

around staples

and stitches

and healing seams

the same seams
that were open six days ago

to take a crushed womb
inside of a woman

who never had a chance
to use it

5.
don't have any eggs left in me
lost them all six days ago

how many coffins
will I need
I wonder . . .

what if I went
to the hardware section
of the Co-op

and picked up a few
of those plastic cases
with rows of one-and-a-half inch boxes

could cut up strips of paper
and write all the names
I would have chosen
had they been left in me

could compensate
by decorating with Anne Geddes
and playing with the children
of everyone I run into

but, would that ever be enough . . . ?

6.

I was so grateful for your high-walled
antique tub

insisted on filling it
every time

to disguise pale breasts stubbly legs
the protruding shape of my belly

I didn't want you to see me as any less
than flawless

the slippery film
emphasized every crease and blemish
when I emerged reaching for a towel

I wished my hands were free
to cover my eyes

as they met yours
in the doorway

7.

wishing every day
for a new womb
as if it's some kind of contest
that I could be an instant winner

I know this body's purpose
is something else
a skin shelter a vessel
that I live inside of

know it will be tested
with different trials
throughout my life
that it's my job
to feel
to remember all of them

this is how wisdom comes
I guess
beating down challenges
and knowing what to tell others
afterwards

8.
getting a new womb
is not the same
as getting contact lenses
or a wig

not one of those things
a lady can add to herself
whenever she chooses

can't find it
in brightly-coloured boxes
on pharmacy shelves
don't think technology
has caught up to me yet
if I can't borrow one
or grow another

no, this body is meant
for other things . . .

9.

last night on the phone
Mother asks

if I made another appointment
since my surgery
almost three months ago

feels that she needs to remind me
I was supposed to go and see them
for a check-up six weeks after

I tell her:

I don't need an ultrasound done to show me how empty I am . . .

10.

Lord, I give my body to you
because I'm done trying to fix it

please give me the reason
you won't let me have babies . . .

why do I have to be deprived of this?
I think that I would be good as a mother
learning with babies to adolescence
and with their kids as they grow

I could be the talk-about-everything-grandma
who has her own share of stories
to prove that she lived

I need to share with Patrick
this loving process
rather than him make love
to my void solar system of insides
where babies are supposed to grow

a nine-month cycle
I will never know . . .

no younger replicas of him;
little boy eyes
that match the size of his heart
that five-year-old smile I see
whenever he does something
he shouldn't have

we need to hold a funeral
for those parts of me
that were separated and pronounced dead
that day in October just before five

we wouldn't necessarily have to wear black . . .

11.

picked up the ankle-length black dress
last night
admiring its sleeves and cotton body

knew then
as I measured it up against myself
that I couldn't wear it again

because these days
I'm allergic to black

can't handle the weight it carries
in its thoughts

I don't want to make room
inside myself
to hide things anymore . . .