

Hippocrates

Darlene Young

The doctor calls her *sweetheart* when she cries
at hearing there is nothing he can find.
He pats her back but will not meet her eyes.

He doesn't really mean to patronize,
and in his rosy health thinks himself kind
when he calls her *sweetheart*. So she cries.

Sweet and *heart*. As if illness implies
some pale and docile virtue! She is defined
by what she has imagined in his eyes.

He checks his watch, advises exercise,
perhaps some daily yoga to unwind.
She's heard it all before. And as she cries,

cold from the table seeps into her thighs.
She's only a pale body his mind—
she knows because he will not meet her eyes.

And when he looks toward the door, hope dies.
He shakes her hand and smiles, harmless, blind—
even calls her *sweetheart* when she cries.
The nurse gives her a tissue for her eyes.