

TOKENS

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Etta is the happiest I've ever seen her—
too happy. Emerging from a spinning rack
of sparkly earrings, she exclaims, "Now here

is the lady who showed me her breasts!"
Her bangles click, her eyelashes bat and
the quiche I have brought her is a sad token

in this room filled with jewels. "We need more
surfaces!" Etta cries, her free hand pledging
the breast where the lump was removed.

She skitters this way and that, the quiche
like a burnt face in her palm as she blinks
about for a place to put it. Years from today,

others will tumble from test tubes, punch fists
through cradles sculpted in chicken wire,
but tonight there is a woman on television

screaming from in front of a green screen,
telling us to run with our knives. Purple banners
are empty of faces, she tells us. People don't want

to see change, and we're all playing a part, I know,
when I rise from my bed, ankles and wrists jerked
by invisible strings. I bite into a slice of orange,

but all I taste is the rind. Every space needs
more surfaces, I think, as I set my wedding
ring on the nightstand and something rises from
within me. Something quite dying.