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Symptoms

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SYMPTOMS

There's a strange over-growing of my skin.
It began with the feet and has threatened both ankles.
I believe my leg is in danger.
At any time I expect an ambush.
The eventual seige of my vital veins and womb
could keep me from my body forever.

Let me explain:
I have never known jealousy.
I came of good stock and there was love.
I said "sunny little beaches, porch-lit porches,
dip of roofs, house to house,"
and they patted my hand.

There's a future going out or coming in.
No medicine will do.
Each night in the bedroom my footfalls grow mute,
tied up with some secret.

There must have been reasons.
Was a window left open?
Did a garden grow untended by that long lovely sea?
Perhaps my mother slept too soundly with the memory
of my birth and no one yelled "stop!"
Perhaps as a girl I touched myself too often,
each part of my body infecting some other.
Ten years old, in the dark weedy spot
where garage meets fence,
to think that it all started here,
here, where I held myself and said,
"all the fame and berries of life."