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Cataracts

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Cataracts

They are blaming
cataracts for your misted
vision at seventy-three,
glaucoma for the creeping
blindness worse at night.
They had given you pills and
drops to stay the pressure. They
measure the lens' thickening
gristle with expensive instruments.
And they tell you they can improve
your view with their fine
knives and needles.

But I know what they do
not. I and my sisters know though
we do not speak of it often
forgetting that we
know ourselves
how your sight must have
crusted long ago
so despite your good heart you
looked at the soft
bodies of your daughters who
loved you without condition, who
thought you perfect as our mother
hadn't, and mis-
took us for lovers.

Once when I was twelve and alone,
bored in my mother's room, I
pulled your portrait
free of its silver
frame, its cardboard
backing; then with the pin of a broach
poked out your eyes.

You are afraid to have this operation.
They say it will probably work, they
predict the odds.
They describe the precise
way they will slice away
scales,
wanting you to go
into this with your eyes
wide open. You are
afraid, and they say this is
normal.
They do not know what
we know.
They think it is
blindness you fear.

Donna Henderson