

# CutBank

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## Gravitation

Cara Chamberlain

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**GRAVITATION**

On every floor are children's beds,  
wheelchairs, gurneys, and plastic quarts  
of milky chemicals. Some children  
are bald and some don't sense the needle;  
some can't remember how to breathe,  
their faces pinched and white  
above tracheotomy tubes.  
The cribs and beds are made of steel.  
Nurses prepare blood samples  
and long coils of hollow plastic  
for the administration of enemas,  
their patients strapped to orthopedic chairs  
in rooms where light is low and gray,  
windows casting a northern gloom.  
Who would think I might be here,  
counting my son's breath. We don't belong.

Walking laps around the hospital,  
I realize I've forgotten  
the weather's cold, that there is weather.  
I plan our escape—slipping down  
factory shores, startling thousands  
of blackbirds who spread like cinders  
on cold orange light, who whistle  
and call and whirl in spirals over  
trees and junkyards. We'll sleep  
by the river, awaken stiff and thoughtless,  
and run farther as currents gather  
volume and force, and finally slow  
in the soupy mass of summer life—mats  
of algae, sauces of frog and salamander eggs,  
pale slices of soft-shelled turtles  
cutting through murky silt, mucous-slick

hide of the largemouth bass. On the Amazon  
now we drift with arowana fish—  
diamond scales, ribbed fins—as the long  
coil of catfish barbers wraps my thighs,  
the anaconda's gravitation pulls deeper.  
Is it this point when I discard my burden  
to save myself?

Sliding doors open, and the lobby fountain  
bubbles over colored rocks.  
Outpatient areas are deserted,  
wash buckets slump on vinyl tile.  
Gigantic stuffed animals, false smiles,  
look down from the mezzanine.