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Invitation

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INVITATION

A mallard bathes in meltwater at the pond's southern curve, his cautionary orange feet, practical and rubbery as galoshes.

Beneath the pitted mother-of-pearl there must be a still place waiting —under a latch-hole, a hundred kinds of blackness

and a flowering, somewhere, of gills. Tread lightly, the mallard says, leaving a faint herringbone of prints in the snow.

My friend —a student of Buber, who fills her sideboard with receipts and paper roses and a peach that's shrunk away from its skin—

says she's not eating much these days by which she means everything she does not eat helps her grow empty enough

to receive the world. I'm confused by violence against the self in service of the spiritual, though I'm

given to violence myself. Exit the elevator at level 4 where patients wear regular clothes

and no window opens. In the ward's café, a woman named Roxanne hatches her wedding plans. The whiskered attendant

will be maid of honor. Come. Everyone will be there. Mauve tabletops conceal their bolted pedestals. A man paces inside

a set of eight linoleum squares. When my friend speaks to me
of an agony of narrowness I don't know

how to listen. I think instead of an animated film I've seen, every picture
made in sand, of a skater who as she turned became a fissure in the ice, into which
she vanished.