

At the Y

Sitting in the whirlpool
at the Y
chatting with the woman
in front of the jet
next to mine.
Bubbles slide up our backs
punctuate our conversation
as we rummage through
the usual inconsequential topics:
how cold the pool was today,
articles stolen from lockers lately.

My casualness shocks me
so soon after my mother's death.
For a while, I forgot.
Can she tell—this stranger
with the white strap marks
contradicting her off-season tan—
how can she know
what my life's been like
these last few weeks?
What secrets is she covering up?

There is a scar—appendectomy
or maybe caesarean—
across her lower belly, surely
the cause of some anguish
at some point in her life,
though you'd never guess
from her face.

Here we sit
just before lunch
making small talk
in the whirlpool
naked, smiling
revealing nothing.

— *Pat Jasper*