Stella, Nurse Practitioner

The first day, the day of the mammogram
she wore stones that glittered in the dirty light
that swung and flipped about her waist.

We all watch her, the dainty steps
her swishing hips. All try to catch her eye
her tender smile, be noticed by the queen.

The second day, the day the radiographer
was there she wore a string
of pastel flowers like sweets.
Slim as a poplar, moving like a nun
among the mad. *How are you?* she says
remembering us as if she cares.

Then for the day they cut out all those
little samples with a gun that went
‘bang-bang’, she wore the pearls
pink and white, the ones her mother
gave her when she had her little girl.

But in the office, where Al-Azawi rules
at last she’s just the nurse, sheltering in the shade
of that great baobab, tree of life. Superfluous
as his cool fingers sweep and press.
*Interesting, suspicious.*

The diagnosis at last confirmed,
just her eyes upon me hold me up
her hand soothing, keeps me sane.

**Berta Freistadt**

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