

AT YOUR CANCER RECHECK I CONSIDER

LAURA SWEENEY

roaming campus, playing bubbles, strolling in the park,
sharing a tuna sandwich and watermelon cupcake

with you, a natural athlete and me an aesthete who can't throw
a football softball tennis ball while you chase them all.

Like your favorite rope I curled up to the night you slept
at the vet. Or the stuffed bear I found on a park bench,

a hospital gift you tussled until the eyes popped, as we
sat on the floor, cuddled in my lap. Now, you roll

your belly toward me, shyly. I consider my own breasts,
untarnished by tumors, safe from hormone poisoning,

consider our bodies in their forties, two barren bitches
who need to watch our figures. I know you're aware

of your surgeries, how they marred your tummy.
I sing an ode to your nipples to your cranial chain

to wide margins. Like the lady who shared her retriever's
story, canine cervical cancer. *She'll be fine*, she assured

as I lamented the warning about your back
not your décolletage. Or the man from NYC who jets

back and forth to care for his kitten. *She's my baby*
he says, and I the rah-rah queen chant, Spay your pet.

Freya Sunshine, Freya Monster, I've loved you longer
than any man. When the others turned away you stayed,

licked our wounds. When the receptionist interrupts, says
"we need to weigh her before the doctor will see you,"

I have to admit my pleasure, when others stare
they only see your surface, only I know your scars.