Still sun blind, I wheel your chair through the darkened room to the largest tank, where hammerheads swim in the aquamarine glow, the torpedo of their bodies sleeking past you beyond the glass. Wanting respite from the heavy pushing, wanting unburdened time to take in the small brilliant lives of darting reef fish, for once, I leave you, brake on and safe.

But when I turn away into the milling crowd, it is I who fall—only a few feet from you, tripping over a small girl, my body old, heavy, coming down on her, her arms flailing, trying to fight it back.

She lets out a cry that rips straight through and her mother snatches her up, snaps at me in anger. Sorry. Sorry. I say again and again as I try with no luck to struggle to my feet, straining against the dark and the gravity, thinking how hard it is to rise from the downthrust of weight and age, aware of shame’s bloodrush, tears beginning as if I were the hurt child, the one who needed saving.

Suddenly I hate your wheelchair, the knees that will not hold you, your blocked heart. I want you here at my elbow, your hand pulling me up, your arm gripping my shoulder, comforts in my ear.

But you’ve never even noticed, hooked as you are to the aqua light, flashing points of the teeth, the flat implacable eyes.