**Chemotherapy** by Julia Darling

I did not imagine being bald

at forty-four. I didn’t have a plan.

Perhaps a scar or two from growing old,

hot flushes. I’d sit fluttering a fan.

But I am bald, and hardly ever walk

by day, I’m the invalid of these rooms,

stirring soups, awake in the half dark,

not answering the phone when it rings.

I never thought that life could get this small,

that I would care so much about a cup,

the taste of tea, the texture of a shawl,

and whether or not I should get up.

I am not unhappy. I have learned to drift

and sip. The smallest things are gifts.

From *Sudden Collapses in Public Places* (Arc Publications, 2003).