CRYSTAL HURDLE

ANNE’S WEDDING PHOTO

the black and white has been colourised
but I’m sure the blush is real
carmine lips
elegant
veil diaphanous to her feet
and the train so long
it made the flower girls sigh

lilies and roses in her bouquet
with buds tied on ribbons
cascade to her slippers

I wish I’d been one of those girls
strewing petals in Anne’s wake
on her day of days

her smile is bright in the photograph
over sixty years old
today the same smile

if I look up

I can stroke the wedding gown
blush satin
white in the photo then
soft cream

now
she gives it to me
my most precious possession

it zips up one side between hip and armpit
designed to show off her figure
won’t close on me
no hourglass for me

At 90 Anne claps her gnarled hands to see me in it
Lovey, you look a treat!
you could have been the marzipan doll
on my wedding cake

in a secret niche downstairs
her christening gown hides
white crochet and ruched smocking
made by her mother
hemmed with eyelet lace
pink roses French knotted into place
lovingly girdled with long ribbons

Soon Anne will be tiny enough to wear it
PIRACY

marooned in the house
that will soon no longer be hers
barely aware she’s been shipwrecked
she could swim to one of the chesterfields
floating, so many of them!
if only she had the will
she is shrunken
growing smaller into herself
soon to become a fish
conserving energy,
barely breathing

through the waves
she sees people pick over her treasures
sniff, offer her little,
say things like, “I could take [ ] off your hands”
but her hands smell of brine
and the scales are metallic
shiny like the precious metals she’s lost

when out of her sightline
as the horizon tips
they chortle with glee
at the plunder
salivate over the booty
spread out the silver
rub their hands together
gloat, glint
kick up their heels and dance

on the sandy bottom
she taps the thin copper piece
that had looked like gold
too late, she’s on to them
those pirates will want this, too
they’ve taken everything

she swallows it like a vitamin pill
acid, but it goes down
it will take more doing for them to take it
now
the gills will take some getting used to