We walked in through soft chiffon to a space made for tending,
where hair becomes silken, bounced, curled and twisted,
brows get brushed and lips kissed with gloss.
We stirred sugar into something for softening,
a balm to melt the long day from our skin.
And we sipped juice, pressed fresh and green, beauty from the inside out.
We swooshed swathes of colour to our faces,
learnt which hues hush us and which make us glow
and then later, at home,
we will find ourselves again, already waiting in the wardrobe.

And Dr. Neff reminded us, softly, that we have never done this before,
so we can forgive ourselves for all the ways we are still learning.
Treat yourself like a dear friend, she said,
with your warm hand on your thumping heart,
see the ache and let it be.
You can say it quietly, whisper even
To be human is to be imperfect. To be alive is to be trying.

Dr. Galaria threw down the gauntlet,
pulled the ribbon taut across the New Year's finish line
and dared us to run.
Or, y'know, just walk a little more,
eat cleaner and greener.
Looking younger, she said, is not the same as looking better
a raisin shouldn't try to be a grape (my words, not hers)
a raisin shouldn't try to be a grape,
it should just work some retinoids into its routine and wear its SPF, okay?

Luly's lesson was that hair cannot be homogenised,
and your whole head doesn't need the whole process each time,
the fringe needs a serum, the tips need a scrunch.
But the best sorcery the hair whisperer taught us
is that you can give yourself a facelift
with everything already attached to your head.
Scrape it back, hoik it high, look up to the sky while you're doing it,
like you're waiting on a shooting star.

The lymphatic system is your body's filter,
breath and movement shift the fluid, but so can your own magic hands.
Start at the belly button and swirl clockwise,
curl into a question mark like your tummy is wondering something.
Something like, *is this going to make me poop?*

Tatiana taught us to move from chin to ear like you're sculpting bone.
And isn't that already poetry?

So is the way Lauren paints a face,
backcomb the brows, then brush up and out,
feathered as wings, wild but well-mannered.
A face requires three foundations: a whole neutral sunset for that lovely canvas of you,
and the trick to a perfect match is that the base colour vanishes completely,
melts into you like snow on a warm palm.
Your lips might be an almost symmetry,
so pick your favourite side:
the one that curves, the one that grins a smidge wider,
and draw the other half to match.
A mouth made whole by choosing the parts of you you love the most.

And Ma Mac,
fierce as a freshly struck match.
If you could bottle your confidence and pop it in the gift bag,
I'm sure we'd all be better for it.

But it was Camila who said it best
scooped us all up in the name of connection, of community.
Find a little photo of little you,
smile big and brilliant, (bangs, even bigger)
stick her somewhere you can see and make that girl proud.
Because she's not gone, that little one,
she's in there, gap-toothed and glittering,
pressing her face to the window of your ribs,
watching you walk into rooms like this one
and losing her mind with joy.

Learn more, do better, pass it on.
You are the women of today,
holding the door open for the women of tomorrow.