Bristling

Not a second skin but some stiff layer right along the skin about half an inch out.
Brittle, separate. Made of hostility.
So that I just miss slamming drawers on your fingers, sloshing boiling water on you.
And my words without trying without intent hit and cut and immediately are guilty.

And cut guilt back into me, barbed and ugly. Blood in every thought, bile in every word, death and darkness hissing in the thin space between self and skin.

And because you are there you are the target, the magnet, getting hit or nearly hit, the close calls a hidden fantasy of revenge turned inward.

You do not know how many ways I have cut smashed crashed and blinded you, blinded myself with the twisted barbs turned in, turned out, a hair shirt facing both ways, bristling.

ANNE LE DRESSAY