

Manikin

I first saw her through the window
in front of Macy's department store.
Her pistachio-green fingernail polish,
hot-pink lipstick and burnt-orange pantsuit
were a garish looking combination.

Three weeks later I bumped into her
standing goddess-like in the lingerie department,
sporting a stunning royal-blue camisole—
her lips still hot-pink and her nails always pistachio-green.

I convinced her to come with me
while no-one was looking
and I secreted her to my apartment.

She wanted to stay the night
so I slept on the floor at the foot of the bed
while she quietly slept like a lifeless dummy.

Over the years we became quite close—
I painted her nails, brushed her several wigs,
unfastened her bra and moved into her bed.

She said little but listened well
and never scolded me for smoking
or coming home late smelling
of cheap perfume and liquor.

I tried keeping our relationship secret,
but my children knew and disapproved.
Eventually they quit coming to visit—
said they couldn't stand to see her
and that the idea of that thing in my bed
was revolting and an effrontery to their mother.

Now I'm ninety-three, nearsighted,
and nearly burned the house down
when I forgot to stub my White Owl out.
The kids have had me declared incompetent,
incapable of making my own decisions;

[No Stanza Break]

they are moving me to a home
for old people with dementia.

I'm to be given a room with a single bed:
no unauthorized visitors and no room for her.
"Because that sort of activity just ain't allowed."

But who will change her clothes, brush her hair,
paint her nails and help her into and out of bed?
She's helpless without me and won't understand why.

The Second Coming

*Mary had a little doll
its skin was white as snow
and everywhere that Mary went
her doll was sure to go.*

I

Mary Blackstone stood whimpering
at the foot of her Golgotha,
as the naughty boys
disrobed her immaculate doll,
placed a circlet of briar rose
upon its ceramic head
and nailed it to a tree.

Bedraggled, dehydrated
and weak after fainting,
Mary stood staring at the square nails
in the side of the gnarled tree
where her doll had been cruelly hung
yet had mysteriously disappeared.

II

Penitent Puritan lads pled guilt,
implored forgiveness
and accepted punishment meted.

Peter and Thomas
helped un-pile the cobbles
they and Judas
had piled upon the doll.

Expecting to find
a misshapen mangled mass
of porcelain shards...
they found nothing.

The doll had mysteriously disappeared
and little Mary Blackstone wept.

III

Seventy times seven solstices later,
myriad discarded broken dolls
rose up from the city trash-piles,
the ash-heaps and the long
forgotten hallowed doll graves
dotting the New England countryside.

Thousands of dirty violated things
ascended upon the northern slope
of gas-lit Boston's Beacon Hill,
led by sweet Mary's broken doll—
its skin as white as snow.

Endless numbers of broken dollies truded
like sheep behind the Blackstone doll,
swarmed the streets and haunts
of Boston's Mount Whoredom
like exsanguinated zombies
methodically somnambulating
with nowhere else to go.

Doll-Cycle

Death is a doll in a pink dress
peddling a rusty
red and white tricycle.

I first saw Death
peddling in the Colome
homecoming parade,
her pink dress
billowing in the wind,
whilst throwing candy
to all the bad little boys and girls—
just before Jim's daughter
was accidentally backed over
by Glen
in the cherry-red fire-engine.

When Mother died
and I buried her in the pasture
I saw the doll-cyclist
laboriously climbing the tall sandy hills—
a pink spot in the distant horizon.

I could not tell, but I imagined
Death was grinning—
just like she did that day
when Glen
backed up the cherry-red fire-engine.

Last year, moments before
the Pettit kid died,
I heard a peculiar crunching noise.
It sounded like tricycle tires
plodding through loose gravel.

And today...
I'm really worried.
I thought I saw a flash
of pink and white and rusty-red
in my rearview mirror.

Carrousel

Grandma insists
her dropped lidless doll
crawled widdershins
through enameled bobbing horses
against the centripetal force
of the carnival carrousel
before spinning its head
completely around.

Rag Dolls

Raggedy Ann and Andy
lay just where I left them
nestled side by side
up against the feather pillow.

But Ann's scarlet locks
seemed slightly tousled
and her blue dress a bit wrinkled
plus, there was the tiniest rip
to her white pinafore.

And Andy, I swear
his freckled grin was wider
and I noticed a bead of sweat
at the center of his forehead.