

Robin Collins

Girls

Their mouths are holes--
open “ohs,” they greedily swallow air
type love letters with bitten fingernails,
contemplate skipped meals--
chomp on mozzarella and lies.

Lonely, needy girls stare from windows
in downtown buses and try to catch the eye
of men absorbed in Nietzsche--
their dark eyebrows furrowed into philosophical paper
and they wonder what it feels like to be unbound,
their lonely girliness, a heavy silver chain around the neck--
they rifle through overstuffed purses and reapply chapstick.

Lonely, needy girls make up stories
in lonely, needy skulls--
clenching plastic doll limbs in their tiny fists,
Barbie's life was always better than their own.
Remembering the freedom of a self-inflicted haircut,
the ability to tear away the smile from their mother's face.
“Oh, what have you done?”

Their imagination unfurled--
a torn paper map and a broken compass--
they trudge through darkened alleyways--
clutch sweaty palms and mace,
look for that glorious nightclub called Love,
settle for a dive named Infatuation,
sanitize their hands, their sticky thoughts.

Freedom dredged within themselves--
a faltering tick-tock of their empty chest,
they sit at empty booths and stare into corners,
memorize the hairlines of celebrities,
decide to live again.

And they wish that all the lonely people weren't in a Beatles' song
their own fingerprints degraded, no longer unique,
another black plastic bag on the sidewalk,
broken heels and half-eaten Lean Cuisines,
another splat of smarmy spider underneath an affordable boot.
They laugh like drum riffs at their own self-importance.

All the lonely, needy girls want is conversation
they forsake the metallic orgasm,
the tangle of tongue,
the meaty interweaving of hands,
clutching, instead, glossy magazines,
they believe in the gospel of overanalyzing,
but their bodies are safes—the key hidden within their mouths

Train Stop: NYC

Maybe we aren't like rats—
their scabbed tails colliding in a haphazard dance.
We never stop to sniff or to chase,
our fingers clutch briefcases, beady eyes stare straight—
No, we are like pigeons—
our reptilian talons clinging to greasy french fries,
Pecking, pecking, pecking at lives,
we coo selfishly into rancorous thin air.

The earth is just a setting—
a damaged statue to perch,
we stretch our sparse feathers to grey skies.
We open our needy beaks. We squawk, feed,
We never speak from our gullets—
we ruffle our bodies, attempt large largess.

Rats are more than human—
their squeaking symphony, a dissonant harmony—
they crawl over each other in a playful dance—
tiny nose kisses tiny ear—
they build their colonies under our feet—
dance a feigned death on our unfeeling tracks.