

PETER JAY SHIPPY

## *Wedding song*

Mother was dressed in a cinnamon sari,  
pistils flourished from each of her four palms

as a man, my father, unsheathed his dagger and leapt  
from an unlit pyre toward her, outside, paper

confetti fell, tickertape, mummy snow, to honor  
a fresh batch of astronauts back from outer space

waving to the throngs from firemist convertibles,  
Cadillacs and Thunderbirds, an Eldorado

pulled circus cages jam-packed with prisoners  
and booty, lop-eared moon warriors glowing

like jellyfish and chests of refined uranium,  
I remember being marooned at Nana's house

in Buffalo, summer afternoons spent looking  
for something to undo and finding wedding photos

in the piano stool, on TV the lunars  
were being pelted with candy bars, Baby Ruth,

there was a look behind their whiskers that said  
we have swallowed the song that will open the lock,

Mother was dressed in a cinnamon sari,  
a woman, my Aunt Rebecca, was balancing

on a spinning, wooden top, in another shot  
a bare-chested old man, *possibly a holy man,*

*possibly my Uncle Marvin,* Nana said,  
had opened his wide-lapeled shirt, *silk chartreuse,*

to reveal his sunken chest, covered with tattoos,  
Cadillacs and Thunderbirds, an Eldorado

snored on a velvet fainting couch and dozens  
of patchouli votive candles burned ghost money

as a man, my father, unsheathed his dagger and leapt  
into the whiteout of the bunny hop mambo,

we have swallowed the song that will open the lock,  
a combo of cousins in plastic hula skirts

strummed “The Wedding Song” on plastic combs and ukes,  
I remember being marooned at Nana’s house,

confetti fell, tickertape, mummy snow, to honor  
the boy born dumb, son of a gun, the catboat

sailing a sea of tigers, steelies, and agates  
on a spinning, wooden top, in another shot

waving to the throngs from firemist convertibles  
in Buffalo, summer afternoons spent looking.