

Three Poems · *Debra Hines*

TRADEMARK

Her skin is white as cornsilk.
She has the face of the pretty girl

Who sat next to you in math, who answered,
Softly, the right answers to all formulas.

She wore a small-collared blouse
Under a grosgrain-ribbed cardigan.

She curled her brunette hair with orange juice cans.
Every fall, she wore a new pair of oxblood penny loafers.

The pennies stayed shiny throughout the spring
And beyond graduation.

She became what everyone wanted her to be—
A mother helping a daughter understand

Multiplication in the evenings,
After preparing a delicious sauce

With cornstarch as the thickening agent.
She is no red Indian.

Her hands are long-fingered, pink, and white.
The tassel she holds,

And the bright feathers in her headband,
Point north and west

Into the blue field above her head.
They point to the R in ARGO; R, for rain.

In her green husk robe with deep blue folds,
Her body is an elongated ovum, insect-like.

Her robe splits apart to reveal one full row
Of yellow kernels, and two half rows.

From the neck down, judging from the hard red
Outlines of the kernels,

She is feed corn, slop corn.
She is ripe for the hogs.

THE SPOILED WOMAN

I've spoiled you, he said, and it was true.
He had spoiled her. She no longer cooked.
Once she had liked cooking. She no longer cleaned.
What she did was say how they never had fun anymore.
This made him feel bad. She talked about how much work
the baby made for her. This made him feel very bad.
It reminded him of his mother who had never seemed to want
him near her. And now his wife was hardly recognizable.
Once she had had a U-shaped smile.

From the beginning the baby knew his father's voice
and preferred him to her. Because I play with him,
her husband said. She played with the baby too.
But still he preferred his father. When she married
she thought, Finally, I am someone's favorite.
She had never been the favorite of anyone.
Now, the husband was the favorite of the baby
and the baby was the favorite of the husband, and yet,
he could not be happy until there were two more babies.