

## Dreaming Against a Backdrop

*Jesse Lee Kercheval*

There are no pictures  
of our parents' wedding,  
so imagine one instead,  
a restaging of the day  
with scenery. See,  
the kitchen floor painted  
green becomes a garden  
where the reception has begun.  
Here's our mother's Brownie;  
take a snapshot  
and put it in an album.  
Father in his uniform,  
Mother in her blue suit,  
on her hand a wedding band,  
the one that I wear now,  
trying to bring luck  
to such a luckless thing.

Look closely, sister,  
and you'll see  
you are already in the picture,  
in our mother's belly  
underneath her skirt.  
Now look very very closely,  
and you'll see that I am too.  
You are dreaming  
and you are dreaming me.  
In your baby alphabet,  
all fruits and pets,  
*A for Apple, B for Bunny,*  
S is already  
for your only sister.

Out on the lawn,  
they served cupcakes  
and ice cream, that bee's joy,  
all leading to such sorrow.  
Already, it's too late  
for us to stop the wedding,  
but what if we refuse  
to take our cue and come along?  
Refuse to turn the pages  
in the album that lead  
to you, then me?  
I lean into the photograph  
and rescue you, my peach.  
Our bullet heads  
will not be squeezed  
from anybody's body.

Our parents will have  
to be themselves and nothing of us,  
have to live  
a life of highballs,  
tipsy dinners on TV trays.  
A cat. At most, a dog  
to keep them company.

We will stay out late,  
dipping like swallows  
in the night air above the garden,  
turn on a red geranium,  
when it's too dark to see.  
And when our parents die,  
as they do, badly and too soon,  
we will not know them  
and so will not have to mourn  
for them, cry for them,  
and miss them every day.  
There will only be  
the two of us, *no birthdays,*  
*every day a party,*  
floating, ageless in the sky.