

Kyeren Regehr

Gloee

She chittered around the ashram
squirreled in light, ribby as a ballerina,
flitting backwards through doorways,

always backwards. Hair bobbing like a frayed tutu,
grey roots glinting beneath the blonde.
Clicking the tip of her tongue at her teeth
as if calling an invisible dog. Her boy-lover

wandering in with his wonky star-struck grin—
thirty years and a hundred volts between them.
Even if you couldn't see auras you'd get the sense

she glowed. She could snap another brother inside out
with a brush of her shoulder, arc spasms of energy
through an unwitting body—have you starfished
on the dining hall floor, psychotropic, gone.

She was the real deal—some kind of lightning rod.
So much light she seemed out of control.
And didn't everyone want it.

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I was assigned Barn duty: a bee-hive of haunted
rooms in the furnace-piped underbelly of the dorms.
Devotees dropping their junk into sorting bins, and
there on the schedule, Gloee, penned

next to mine. She'd tip-toe in, angel-marionette,
find my mind in a moment
and scoop me out of my head. She'd lift me

from my worries and fears, float me to the ceiling
and keep me there, hanging
like my own halo, seeing everything
through a golden lens. With Gloee

an hour of service flowed like effortless
minutes, sorting clothes onto hangers, shelving
LP's, penny dreadfuls, bric-a-brac. When we'd
emptied the day's donations

she'd whisper *thank you*. I'd nod and smile
high as a flag pole, always amazed
she could speak. Then she'd kite away backwards,

and my mind would tumble in, tears rolling
with the shock of re-entry.

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When we could count ribs through her sweater,
when her breath soured and veins corded
the backs of her hands, the brothers mostly

abandoned her. Her lover
left for the ashram in Germany. They all
rolled their eyes, avoided her

jerky sparrow steps. *You're not a body, Gloee,*
they'd say. *Change your mind, heal yourself.*

Some days I teaspoons tiny portions
of supper onto her saucer. She'd whisper
That's enough and hunch at a far table

by the broken bain-marie. *You must eat more*, they'd say. *You're not just light, Gloce.*

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There was no service, no wake. Nothing to mark her passing—I don't know who emptied her room, slid her slippers from the foyer.

She left me her boxy beater sedan,
puckered with dents, trunk brimming
with Barn junk—pulp romances, teen-sized

dresses, and an empty jewellery box with
a broken lid and wind-up key. Although I
took it with me, I don't recall winding the
box. It's sold now,

for a Loonie at a yard sale,
and I don't know what music it played.