



## Three Poems

by Kelley J. White

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### Development

They are in a doorway, but you can't tell.  
Bright faces emerge out of darkness.  
Plastic jewels reel down the baby's chest,  
pool in her lap. She has hung a dozen  
necklaces around her neck. One giant slipper,  
out of focus, brushes the lens. She peeks  
over large yellow sunglasses pulled below her eyes.  
Ribbons curl over her head, beside her sister's  
smile. And it is a smile. The big green shirt falls  
forward, exposing a little shoulder. Dimple.  
Good cheekbones. A missing tooth. Pearls  
and lace. Darkness behind them. Dark  
underneath. Am I behind the camera  
or in the dark room behind the door?

### Double-Boiler

He kept a skull in his head and carried an iron  
mask. He loved the taste of napalm flaring  
red and roaring on his tongue. PT Barnum  
signed him for Hollywood and the Broadway  
stage came undone.

Scaliwag, someday his head was empty,  
and his weave came all undone. His arm  
was scarred up and torn where the muscles  
had been cut. He ate mice and birds so he  
knew he had to be a cat.

Graceful frogs danced by. He remembered  
his silken wings. Petunia wore her halo.  
It flashed a storm was coming through. That  
black sunlight sharpened his teeth  
before the first eclipse at noon.

It was nearly hurricane season and Ms. Pig  
wore no hat. The day his wings were torn  
a dancehall toad sashayed past. The cat  
ate it: therefore it must have been  
a mouse. They nearly had

to amputate but he had some movement  
in the hand. His dreads freeze-dried  
and broke. By autumn his head was wrapped  
in dry leaves. The one man show closed  
down on Christmas,

he took the midnight train. Got a job with

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Truman Bros. Stayed onstage. He swallowed  
swords spitless, with a sizzle, and a gasp.  
He slept inside an iron lung. He kept  
his brain inside a skull.

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## Dragon Teeth

Bruce Lee fought in a hall of mirrors;  
he stood in horse stance, bleeding  
from parallel claw cuts down his narrow  
muscled chest. At every turn he saw  
himself. In slow motion he leaps, kicks,  
shatters. I avert my eyes or I will see  
myself, huge, reflecting back  
to eternity in any direction. My body  
is clumsy, untrained. If I step forward  
I pursue myself, running away, away,  
away. . . Are they carnival mirrors,  
distorting, or must I face their truth?  
I make myself blind, stumble through.  
I crack the glass, fragments: lip, eye,  
fingernail, ear, elbow, knee. Seven years  
bad luck, seven, seven, another seven,  
seven. I have not got that many years.  
My feet bleed when I step across  
the silvered pieces. I am still pursuing  
myself over my left shoulder. Is this  
how we die, Bruce, cut by the  
pieces of our broken selves?

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Pediatrician **Kelley J. White** worked in inner-city Philadelphia and now works in rural New Hampshire. Her poetry has appeared in journals, including *Exquisite*, *SNReview*, *Corpse*, *Rattle*, and *JAMA*. Her most recent books are *Toxic Environment* (Boston Poet Press) and *Two Bird in Flame* (Beech River Press). She received a 2008 PCA grant.

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