



Three Poems

by Kelley J. White

[Home](#)

[Spring-Summer 2013](#)

[Winter-Spring 2013](#)

[Fall-Winter 2012-2013](#)

[Summer-Fall 2012](#)

[Spring-Summer 2012](#)

[Winter-Spring 2012](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011-12](#)

[Summer 2011](#)

[Winter/Spring 2011](#)

[Autumn/Winter 2011](#)

[Summer 2010](#)

[Spring 2010](#)

[Winter 2010](#)

[Autumn 2009](#)

[Summer 2009](#)

[Spring 2009](#)

[Autumn 2008](#)

[Summer 2008](#)

[Spring/Summer 2008](#)

[Winter/Spring 2008](#)

[Editor's Note](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[Contact](#)

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

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.

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?

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.

Copyright 2013, © Kelley J. White. This work is protected under the U.S. copyright laws. It may not be reproduced, reprinted, reused, or altered without the expressed written permission of the author.
