

Unfinished Sestina for the Secretary of Defense

Kathy Evans

We were inside the world.
The children were sleeping.
Light fell through the window.
One of us wore red.
Three tulips on the ledge mocked the sky.
We touched the cold, white walls.

In seconds the children were inside the walls.
The tulips closed; the world
opened. We were wearing the sky.
Those of who were not sleeping
watched the white light turn oxblood red.
Three of us blew out the window.

The world came through the window.
It stood on the ledge and mocked the walls.
Light fell through us, we, who were porous and red.
The tulips opened over the world.
No one was sleeping.
Three children wore the sky.

No one mocked the oxblood sky.
The tulips looked foreign in the window.
A white light fell over us like sleep.
We turned cold. Some of us opened the walls.
One of us on the ledge of the world
touched the tulips. All of us wore red.

The children, lacquered in red,
blew leaf-like from the ledge into the sky
where the light was wearing the world,
where the sky opened like a small window,
where we touched without hands, where the walls
blew away and the red tulips slept.

How do you tell the dead lain among the sleeping?
Mockingly, the windows are red.
The light of our blood falls through the walls.
All of us touch the sky.
The children are blooming in the window,
and the tulips are in flames on the ledge of the world.

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