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Girls at Confirmation

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Two Poems · *Gail Shepherd*

GIRLS AT CONFIRMATION

They are scraps of lace, a dressmaker's ribbon
unspooled, despoiled. From where the congregation stands
they're grained with dust and distance. That first communion,
its discomfiting clichés: demure hands,

the rustle of best dresses, a flurry as angel-moths
flutter up the aisle toward a myth
of heavenly incandescence, each pretty mouth
open for the tang of flesh and blood. As if

suffering could be traded with such innocence!
Seen from above, through God's fish-eye lens:
the girls in marriage whites, their parents
a blur of benevolence under the granite saint's

grey-blue regard, his oriental smile on the verge
of sensuality. Dome-light rests its lance
gently on the priest's shoulder. And hands
press host to tongue, hands urge

them back into the sun again. Already, in a borrowed car,
and out all afternoon, perhaps on Lovers' Hill,
they sit remotely, overlooking the stagger
of houses and spires, feeling dreamy, restless, evil.