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Cover Girl Run for Cover

Rénee Olander

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Renée Olander / Cover Girl Runs for Cover

Now more than a third
through life, I figure
the strange youth I feel
inside deludes me
not unpleasantly,
like promises on bottles
of renewal cream I buy

Careful about my eyes,
I shop for the silver box
of liner, to write
delicate along my lids,
expanding my orbs
according to ads
& mirrors—

I like to think of Cleo
my kin & queen
who wrote kohl
around her eyes, commanded
space in history, art,
imagination—took lovers
& ate fruit

Luscious as shiny apple
lipstick Mom smoothed on
in her rearview mirror
as soon as she belted in
& revved the engine.
Her pursed & blotted lips
signaled *drive*

But lipstick & eyeliner
couldn't save them
I know under the glow
of makeup mirror bulbs—
brushing lashes violet
for kicks as if kids
weren't starving somewhere

For the attention
I stroke on myself,
clowning around
with creams & powders,
colors, mattes, & glitters—
I make the time
& defy voices ticking

inside the clock: mortality,
altruism, economy,
simplicity, shoulds
& woulds—I avoid
metallic blue eyeshadow
out of fashion
this season—

Fawn satin & mocha pink,
apricot sands & emerald pearl
delight me in containers
that click closed, definite
& miniature like girls
around the world, who learn
to focus, like me,
to nourish small surfaces

Egged on daily
by glowing messages
for facial goods, & urged
to invest in Cover
Girl remover
& other accoutrements
of glamor & sex

(If I speak plain)
in the mirror, mornings,
making up, what equation
can save face,
what choices I make
as if a thousand ships
even care?

& which myths & masks
matter past my nose,
thickened lashes,
glossed lips?
Armed with beauty tips,
I'm a pretty picture
under siege.