

A Girl in a Dress
By Sarah Tallman

There stood a girl in a dress.

Or was she older?
She seemed like a girl but for the way
she held her head.
There she stood in a red dress,
Or was it gingham?
It's hard to say when everything runs together.

Yes, the dress was gingham.
Medium weight, well balanced,
Sturdy and sensible,
plain-woven fabric fantastically faded
and from far away,
the tiniest checks had neatly worn through.
A nice contrast to her bronze skin.

Bare feet planted, her eyes
maintained to the ground. Had I been closer
I would have seen a single tear
slip off her round cheek.
Was there a splash?
It's hard to say when everything runs together.

Yes, a single tear from a round cheek
grazed a gingham dress.
I thought to wave. Could she see me?
"hey there, you okay?"
my mouth was dry,
It suddenly cracked.

Was that my voice? It's hard to say...
The girl, now woman had whittled her own
pool carved from her eyes.
She wept in piercing silence.
I stepped closer in.
She must have been getting warm.

Oh but to have wings
I might have reached them out.
She seemed to stay at the same distance.
A wing finger, not your own
and no face in site.
It seems everything is running together.

My eyes tracked to the girl in the gingham dress.
On the banks of her pool
the breeze spoke, my knees buckled
her cautious fingers wrapped around the something.
Her tenderness I felt
as my own.

I rubbed each finger tip to my thumb.
First the index, then
the next and the next
until landing on the one
2,3,4 a spell for a race
never to be won.

Feeling her gaze
I flinched.
Closer now, I caught a glimpse of her treasure.
How did I arrive?
Or she to me.
It's hard to say when everything runs together.

Her hands mimicked mine,
in them she held
the tiniest bird.
Head bowed in knowing discomfort.
Or sorrow, (everything seems the same)

The bird was curious.
Smooth, slumped shoulders
and delicate wings
with torn tulle dragging
off its' tiny feet. Dark clouds
ribboned around a narrowing sky.

The girl-woman slipped on her shoes
the ground swallowed her whole.
I fell back,
gobbled up by the earth,
Gripping tighter
the trees tipped end over end,

They whispered a lullaby. Or was that me.
And where did the girl-woman go?
No chance to put a name to her face.
The lovely woman
who gifted me
an orphaned bird.

It's so hard when everything runs together.