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"Mechanical Horse with Girl and Bees"

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Mechanical Horse
with Girl and Bees

PAULA BOHINCE

Something sweet on the bridle.
So the bees have no choice,
drawn from industrial hives, culled into day, to this store
called Gabriel’s. I saw them
from my bench by the automatic doors,

liked the look of that horse and its wide painted eyes,
picket teeth and chipped body.
Liked imagining it born in some long-closed factory, its mold
-cracked open, the toy unadorned
as an Easter chocolate,

then taken and painted by women
with gray ponytails and glasses, horsehair brushes,
gullied tail and mane
made white, uplifted hooves
blackened and lacquered,

delivered and bolted
here, so the kid can come in her spring coat
and climb on, kicking its sides,
feeding it quarters.
So it rocks, and so she can sing an invented song to her
horse, for these minutes,
her horse.

The bees, somehow sensing
a temporary queen, idling, then levitating, crowning
the two heads, and me wanting nothing
but my fingers in the cavities
of the horse’s ears,
tented as they were, and feel the dust there, and in
its nostrils, painted red,
violently so,
wanting the bees,
unlike batteries, never to stop,
golden mobile over the flickering —

a girl and her horse,
their rocking and my watching, scrim of garbage
skidding against the electric doors
whizzing apart —

the minute like bees, dying off, dull buzz
of the motor beneath, secret
song gummy and breathless, and the horse, going broke,
slowing it to and fro,
to and fro...