

PETER CAMPION

## **BOSTON: RED HAIR**

Up from subway stairs

ringlets and cleavage  
slick with glitter paste she used

to advertise down Washington  
down Tremont and that city

we were born in  
swiping her consonants:

“hey Peetah got a light?”

My warmest “oh so good to see...”  
while groping pockets

(she knew) was a lie

and this betrayal miniscule  
but absolute.

Pity

the lowest currency how many  
husbands and fathers must have paid before  
coming inside her.

“How does a girl like you?”

But oh

our Saint Paul’s Sunday school

our lips orange smeared with alphabet soup.

Maureen

oh more than I can hold  
in my mouth.

You swatted your hand to mean  
some small forgiveness

or none

before you disappeared again  
inside the wide

electrical fire.

## SITCOM SET

That living room inside the living room  
(central and enclosing as a womb)  
spinning its dreams of friends and families

...of course it was illusion, though it told you  
here was the payoff—glowing splash of ease.  
And for these thirty minutes, ease would hold you.

But once the faces popped to static, drawn  
back through the cathode rays, their dream was gone.  
The actual house surrounding the TV

felt smaller, temporary: single station  
plugged to the turbo-scape, Sargasso Sea  
of city lights swimming in charged relation.

That's how I saw the future, scintillant fizz  
that was the real world, that was distances.  
At least, I thought so, thought my life would form

a line, collecting meaning as it went.  
And not just scribbles building to a swarm  
then smudged, abandoned, never my intent.

Tonight, my kids are at their mom's. A chill  
has settled: summer's turning into fall.  
I took a walk where paths along the river

border back yards, and nursing my regret  
I almost missed it, that electric quiver  
through a screen of leaves: the sitcom set

floating in someone's window. Digital smear  
of faces crinkled with happiness, hanging there  
framed by the dark, their beery companionship

was fake, and at the same time, true, a trick to get the real thing to reveal itself—rip out of its simulacrum, come back.