

The Colonel's Maid

by Pauletta Hansel

(after *The Colonel* by Carolyn Forché)

When they come to his house
it is always the same.
The girl, she flaunts her backside
in the American jeans, her face turned
to the wall as if she does not care
they are there. She files her red nails sharp
as the stiletto in the man's boot.
The boy, he cares for nothing
but himself and the car that takes him away.

The wife rings for me.
I bring them what they want.

The Americans sit on the edge
of the chairs as if they might rise
and run stumbling away from here
but they never do.
The man smiles and shows them
his dog, his new wife
with her lotions, smooth hair,
her laugh like a glass bell.
He smiles and smiles
until cracks begin to form
around the borders of the room.
He knows they know
him beneath the polish of that smile.

I am the one who sweeps up
the blossomed ears
to toss them
into the fishpond
when at last they go.