

Fall 1975

## She'd Been A Ballerina

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### Recommended Citation

Molen, Robert Vander (1975) "She'd Been A Ballerina," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 5 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss5/9>

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## **SHE'D BEEN A BALLERINA**

Red flowers by the window and it is evening  
My aunt is sleeping and I am a guest

In Maine that season the weather was cold the birches loud  
My cabin had white walls and I built a fire daily

One of my friends was a woman from Belgium  
Who enjoyed dancing out of the shadows of chairs

She cooed she kissed my shoulders and she lay on my table  
The moon was stable I was trying to write a novel

She liked me to see her unclothed her husband was sterile  
Her face was lined and her eyes narrow she stared into the fire

She sat on my lap she wanted to be my daughter  
But I was twentysix and I didn't know better

Her dresses were thin and her panties colored  
Her father had died in the war I touched her breasts lightly

Her English was broken and often I didn't understand her  
My floor was unswept her skin was clean and tender

Once a great horned owl sat on the hemlock bough  
Outside of my window I was waiting and I stood on my porch

Once a badger ate my lunch I'd left the door ajar  
I walked the gravel road to the store

I loved her smell and it stayed on my sweater  
We rocked in the chair by the fire snow scratched over the glass

Last night it rained and the wallpaper trembled in thunder  
I felt like a child I cringed under covers

I wonder if she looks like a grandmother now I hope not  
My aunt is sleeping and I am reading the newspaper