

## *Living Dolls*

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*A living doll, everywhere you look.*

*It can sew, it can cook,*

*It can talk, talk, talk. Sylvia Plath*

As a little girl, I never wanted any creepy  
doll. No haunted puppet or voodoo doll.  
Not Twilight Zone's sinister Talking Tina.  
No Chucky of horror fame. Not even  
a sideways glancing Kewpie doll waif  
won tossing balls in a carny booth.

Yet they continued to arrive  
on holidays and on birthdays.  
Betsy Wetsy drink-and-pee in diaper.  
Walking Baby in gingham and Mary Janes.  
Stiff dollies with oddly cheery countenances.  
I wanted none of them—

Not the rosy-cheeked Southern belle  
with golden ringlets and starched ruffles.  
Not the newest bride doll propped up  
on the bed, collections of them crammed  
on a bookshelf or hung high on the wall  
in out of hand displays of crinoline and satin.

I favored the soft comfort of a monkey sock doll  
 my mother clipped, stitched, and stuffed  
 from Rockford Reds. As a little girl I wanted  
 my brother's Lionel train remote  
 to make the trail of cars speed, smoke, and toot  
 along figure eight tracks through a tiny toy town.

As a little girl what I wanted  
 was an Erector Set to assemble bridges,  
 Lego bricks and beams for cityscapes,  
 Lincoln Logs for cabins and barns,  
 appliance box toss away turned clubhouse  
 with Crayolas, scissors, and tape.

I chose, over dressy dolls, to strap on  
 a cowgirl holster and gun with chaps and hat  
 to cruise the block on a cherry Schwinn  
 or to whiz around on slick metal skates,  
 key dangling like a fancy locket  
 from a string at my neck. I really loved

smacking the Wiffle Ball with a bat,  
 firing glass cat eyes against a wall,  
 crawling around on monkey bars,  
 pumping the air on a wooden swing,  
 its rattle of chains in my hands. As a little girl,  
 what I really wanted was to fly—  
 wind in my hair, imagination rocketing.