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Jack in the Box

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JACK-IN-THE-BOX - LAURIE LESSEN REICHE

Behold the bloodless puppet rising
out a cheap quadrangular man-hole.
Fluorescent mandarin hair forming
a deceptive heart around alabaster skin,
framing his daisy petal eyes,
his pink colossal nose,
and boomerang mouth.

Lifeless flat arms are convenient
for his clever retreat
down the hollow enclosure
of his one-man-circus
where night and day he waits
legless
for the monotonous metallic tune
to set him free.

And he goes on contemptuously smiling
at the little ones who sometimes laugh
or cry
at his startling appearance
into our civilized world
where he is slave to tickle-me,
in bondage to humor and relief.

Only I have seen the devil he becomes
when I stare at him at night
in a baby's still room, his eyes fierce
and fiery inciting diabolical deeds
and fearful notions of uncontrollable
rage.

Heartless Jack,
I would smash you to bits
for the threats you so mockingly
spit out at me,
while you watch me cringe,
subservient to your fiendish tricks.
But how would I explain
to the little girl
that mama killed
the Jack-in-the-box
before the Jack-in-the-box
killed her?

