

Queen of the Air

RUTH KNAFO SETTON

September is mine:

he stands at the edge of the cornfield
in maroon fez and dripping brocade.
Sunlit and weary, he holds up
his palm in greeting. I shudder
my bike to a stop, almost tumble
over old books stacked in the wire basket:
*Greatheart, Under Two Flags, Lady Chatterly's
Lover and Nana.* I bought *The Way of an Eagle*
because it was inscribed: To Doris from Harry,
I love you more each day, Merry Christmas
sweetheart, 1919. A tiny black Toto runs
around him, nips his ankle. He stands firm
against singing corn.
and red sun—falling fast.

In *The Moonstone*,

the Indians came to England
for their killer jewel, crossed
their arms and blocked
the center of the road:
a shadow-wall of the East.
His seamed palm too
holds back the traffic
of curious eyes, the curse
of the yellow stone. I ride, no hands,
through a typhoon
of immense proportions.

Leaves arch,

white butterfly (another strange friend)
rings my little finger, birds scissor the air,
quicksilver glance my handlebars,
and laugh away. At night I'll read
by flashlight, squander my sight.
Wind blows my bike over desert and sea.
Blue motes of dust sneeze
from broken pages, crack bindings:
red heels tapped together. Gold letters halo me
like fireflies, crown me Queen
of the Indian Gentlemen
and White Butterflies.
I squint in the moonstone glare:
his fez whirls before me,
streams leaves that glow
like yellow tears.