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After Forty Days, Go Marry Again

—for Vova Tumayev

Beslan School No. 1, September 1, 2004

She was only just here. That's her,
that's her in the red dress, that's
her, too, fists full of balloons as if
she would fly away. That's her at the
bottom of the hill. She ran as fast as she
could toward the top, arms wide,
cheeks flushed. She reached me
breathless and toppled both of us.
That's her, and her again,
her black hair in pigtails held
in yellow ball-stay barrettes.
Girls of that age are particular about
such things. I sleep in her room
some nights with all the lights on,
everything as she left it.

There she is in Rostov, there she is
and there she is and there she is.
There she is: bits of black hair
and the earrings. They say: *Maybe
that's not her.* Look. There.
The ball-stay barrettes. Yellow,
flowers stretched around. There she
is at Christmas. There she is that
summer she grew three inches. They say:
After forty days, go marry again. But
there she is, and there she is again with
her friend from class. That girl is dead too.
There she is at the carnival. There she is
with her mother, her fists
clenched on the balloons. There
she is at the door, lunchbox in one hand,
waving with the other. At night,
I pretend to sleep; there she is
standing over me as if there are words
left to say. There she is. There
she is in the dark.