

# **DOLL STUDIES: FORENSICS**

poems

**Carol Guess**



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She was close, she was verging on something, she might have even caught a glimpse of herself in the miniature deaths, but she hesitated, took a step backward, and regained composure.

—Corinne May Botz, “Killing The Angel In The House:  
The Case Of Frances Glessner Lee”

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# **ONE: THE DENTAL ARCADE**

## Aerial Rifle

Here's the dollhouse wife asleep, night's chores finished in miniature. What hangs above the infant's head is red. I mean the way graffiti moves through trains, signaling who's been and when. Her husband sleeps beside her on the floor. This dollhouse lesson has to do with time. I mean the way sound travels through a house asleep. Detectives learn to sweep a story clockwise for detail. Anyone might own a gun. Pink slippers run in place atop a popcorn rug.

## Late White

Tuesday detains her among beautiful dresses. She lives in the closet now, sprawl study in beaded slippers and bangles. We don't know what she charged for sex. It's easier to describe a flowered dress. You would like for there to be a rose and there is, in the papered room. Above her headboard hangs a moose. A woman found this woman dead. Each might take the other's place, bonbons in a ruffled box. Merlot coats the glass as it dries, diminishing, as one who leaves a party leaves the conversation stained.

## Cottage On The Rocks Estate

Hanging from a twisted cord, this painting brings outside indoors. Through the wall we move as ghosts to pass a cottage flanked by birch. Sometimes we take too long to leave the house. When outside comes in there may be a disruption. Knick-knacks squat atop the mantle, red the color of our lips and nails, red the color of the twisted cord. This painting scares us. Take it down.



## Parsonage Parlor: Girl With Meat

Set the meat beside the money. Let the piano choose its tune, and the calendar its date. Music knows something about the room that you don't. Later, strangers will reuse the chair, ash in the crook of a splintered log. Such cases often go unsolved. Girls get lost in rooms like these, mothers waiting by the tangled cord. Late light butters the flowerbox. A Biedermeier door spills men into the room.

## Longing Of The Bullet For The Log In Which It's Lodged

Marian sped to report Arthur's death, ash in her hair and blood on her dress. Cut away tarpaper. Search for days among sticks and moss. She dropped her purse and moved the gun. He was ending their affair, wife doused in chenille. When lovers quarrel, objects cringe. Although HY-DA-WAY Cabin is equipped with a bunk, we don't know where the couple fucked. She says he lit a cigarette, and out of nowhere came a gun. The bullet tore straight through him to the roof. Who fired at twigs, embedding the clue? Detectives missed it among burlap and snowshoes.