

All This and More

By Mary Karr

The Devil's tour of hell did not include
a factory line where molten lead
spilled into mouths held wide,

no electric drill spiraling screws
into hands and feet, nor giant pliers
to lower you into simmering vats.

Instead, a circle of light
opened on your stuffed armchair,
whose chintz orchids did not boil and change,

and the Devil adjusted
your new spiked antennae
almost delicately, with claws curled

and lacquered black, before he spread
his leather wings to leap
into the acid-green sky.

So your head became a tv hull,
a gargoyle mirror. Your doppelganger
sloppy at the mouth

and swollen at the joints
enacted your days in sinuous
slow motion, your lines delivered

with a mocking sneer. Sometimes
the frame froze, reversed, began
again: the red eyes of a friend

you cursed, your girl child cowered
behind the drapes, parents alive again
and puzzled by this new form. That's why

you clawed your way back to this life.

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