

Wendy Cleveland

Crystal Ballroom, 1960

We lean into the open window framing the dimly lit ballroom
on a full mooned night, best friends too young for the dance,

eyes keen on dresses, ears attuned to rock 'n roll
and laughter of girls in pastel dresses and upswept twists

sprayed with lacquer, not a wisp of stray hair or wayward curl.
I stare at the floor's prism of light like dancing dots

from cut glass crystal balls spun on slender wires,
light catching on feet slipped into open stilettos,

toes painted pango peach, rose red, tangerine.
We rate the boys from one to ten – dreamy smile, perfect teeth –

imagine being swirled then nestled to Brenda Lee's *I'm Sorry*,
bodies pressed into each other, perfumed and sweaty.

What I could not know at twelve would swallow me at eighteen
when summer nights no longer lured me in,

songs loud and lewd, those pretty boys gone off to war,
those giddy girls, liberated, in their short tight skirts,

and that ballroom gone black and silent, torched by vandals
in the thick of night, rafters collapsing in powdered ash.

Wendy Cleveland is a member of the Alabama Writers' Forum and her poems have appeared in *Persimmon Tree*, *Yankee Magazine*, *Red Rock Review* and *Glass Mountain*, among other publications. Her first collection, *Blue Ford*, was published in 2016.