

**THE NEW LADY**

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Momma,  
I wish it were May  
We could celebrate your birthday  
with a big cake and 80 candles. On Mother's Day  
I could have thirty-nine long stem roses delivered--  
one for each year you have been my mom  
and later you could attend the Senior Prom  
in the activity room of your apartment complex.

You were so pretty  
last year,  
in your black sequin gown

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Now, I'm too aware of the lost days.  
Too aware that I'm going to your house;  
collecting rent from the woman whose been living  
there for the last twelve months.

You use to say,  
*I want one of those ranch-type houses,  
dining room, master bedroom and bath,  
no cinderblock basement to be sealed  
and painted.*

This place was perfect.

I inhale deeply, ring the bell,  
notice that weeds are outgrowing  
the petunias and rose bushes.

I reach to rescue a deep red bud  
from a pea-vine as the door opens.

She is ten years younger than you,  
three feet taller,  
her skin is a little lighter, a little tighter,  
and she's wearing a reddish brown wig

Hiding the salt and pepper strands  
you would have straightened,  
and curled while fretting  
because I keep saying fake hair is easier to wear