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Maureen Fielding

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Valentine's Day at the Farm

by Maureen Fielding

They are counting the silverware
Assuring themselves that we have retained no
Instruments of death—theirs or ours—

The drug addict who wears a pinched, hungry look,
The loony who crawls under the TV each night,
The handsome truck driver who tells me
I could be a *Playboy* model.

During the days,
We go for outings in the courtyard
Pacing the chain-link perimeter,
Admiring the sky above—the true beyond.
At night, they give us our pills.
Only the loony objects,
His buttocks protruding from under the TV in protest.

But tonight we will have music and dancing.
Red paper hearts hang from the walls.
While my fellow inmates stare at the tube,
Only one woman in housedress and slippers
Follows the party preparations with excitement.

They unlock the stereo
And bring out the records.
The attendant switches the set off mid-Gilligan.
Some eyes narrow.
Others don't even blink.
Tonight the loony is quiet.

Our white-coated DJ puts on a record.
Our resident Ginger looks for her Fred.
My *Playboy* recruiter steps forward
And waltzes her slippered feet around the room.
The warders smile and smoke.

I sit on the couch, sandwiched between
The drug addict and a suicidal mom.
There is a dance at my high school tonight.
My friends will be drinking and laughing,
slow-dancing and sinning.

I suppose I belong there too,
But I like it here.