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Laurel Kallen

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I Was a Lamp

by Laurel Kallen

when I was born
full of light, and they tried to ignite me further
and, at the same time, snuff out my flame
photograph me naked butt on a rug
wearing a little hat
so I would be cuter than if I'd just been
gurgling in my crib.

If only they'd seen me there,
but they had to stock the fridge
and replace the fuses
arrange piano lessons and teach me to wear
the school face, the restaurant face,
the be-on-your-best-behavior and the
there-will-be-consequences faces.

All day, I resisted and pulled the barrettes out
of my hair. I whined.
When I grew up, I discovered dry wine.
I learned to bring something other than pound cake
to the homes of hosts.
Serve French cheeses.
It made sense to travel abroad.

It made sense to hithchhike.
To forget the sideboard in the dining room
and the blue lineoleum floor.
The front porch
and the cherry tree in the backyard.
There were blueberries and strawberries somewhere, and
I had to find them, ride the horses to find them.