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In Charge

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IN CHARGE

by Robert Cooperman

My mother plays gin
with peregrine greed,
pouncing on cards
as if tamer birds.
We laugh after the games
she'll always win.

She used to play ping-pong
with a fencer's lunging:
her serves, ferocious bees
that stung my nose
before I could swing.

Her swing was fluid
as a heavyweight champ,
the killer instinct
of a hungry polar bear.

I hated her lessons:
that life's a game
you can't win.
I lose gladly now —
whenever she calls,
falcon swift — "Gin!"