

# CACTUS

**RUTH  
MADIEVSKY**

I'm sitting beside a cactus in a stranger's backyard,  
trying to remember the last time  
I celebrated something that wasn't a holiday.  
I'd like to call last night a celebration,  
how the sheets drew around us like a prom dress,  
how my fingers were out partying all night  
in the disco of your mouth. Anyone who says  
they don't want to be celebrated  
is lying. We all want champagne corks to pop  
at each meeting of lips, each slip knot  
of the tongue the launch code  
for another bottle rocket to fire,  
streaking across the sky  
the way a dress peeled like an apple  
slices the dark.  
I'm stroking the cactus between its quills,  
wondering when was the last time  
the man whose house I am renting was celebrated,  
when someone last took him  
in her mouth like a swig of red wine.  
Years from now,  
when we've walked out of all our photos,  
this is what we will remember:

how we coaxed the doves from each other's throats,  
blood like sunlight, the neck an altar,  
how we took each other like barbiturates.