

1996

Rockettes

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Rockettes

It came in the mail slot yesterday. I
stuck my hand
in, and it filled me up. The notice read:

Auditions. Women, willing to travel,
come Tuesday,
6:30. Dancing shoes and skills required.

I hurried home from work that day, smelling
like pork chops
I'd cooked for seventy GE foremen,

along with onions, peas, and my famous
cornbread. I'm
so sick of being famous for something

silly as food. I want my legs to be
noticed. I
would've been a flapper or follies girl,

but those fads have passed. Now I want to be
one of them,
with sequins sparkling, eyes shining, because
they do what they want. They don't go to school,
then work, then
home, where meals are skimpier than the ones

I feed people who make a quarter an
hour. They dance:
for money, for men, for movies, even.

I know I could be like them. I practice
my kicks so
much mamma says I'll put a hole in my head

or the ceiling for sure. I raced to the
audition,
the shoes with taped soles bouncing against my

shoulders. I ran in breathless, nearly faint:
those women,
their beauty deep as the make-up covering

the shells of their faces. They were nasty,
doe-eyed, blond.

I prayed for swooping kicks, and graceful lines.

I squeezed toes into shoes, laced-up, and died
with each step.

No prayer, no God came down to save my soul.

The music ruined me, I slid away.

My one shot

to be a Rockette has flared up and gone.

The bitter peek of freedom it leaves stings.

I taste it

in the peas, pork chops, and yes, my cornbread.

—Trish Klei '97