

Marlene Pearson

A Fine Day for a Middle-Class Marriage

“Put your arms on, Venus, or people
will wonder about your life.”

—overheard at a museum

he told her its a fine day, put on your red dress
she said I cannot swallow oysters
when you keep burning my skin with matches

he said I bought us a house by the ocean
she said all the children out there are drowning

he said show the doctor where it hurts
she reached for the globe

he said lets have a baby. I need the deduction
she said I need to spit out the sour taste in my mouth

she coughed and out came the dead sea
he handed her a napkin and built a resort

he said put flowers on the table and comb your hair
she said the seaweed will not stop screaming

he struck a match, lit the candles
and said hurry up, you're late for dinner
she walked into the sea

the salty jaw would not swallow her
she said I am too heavy and cut off an arm

he said you need a hobby. collect rocks
she swallowed all she could
until she could not move

he bought a museum
put her in a glass case behind a velvet cord
and sold tickets