Gymnasts All Around

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GYMNASTS ALL AROUND
by
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Echoes of school songs rebound in the stairwell
Extended peds march in
Taut faces drawn back with ribbon
Visions of routines tumble among the stars and stripes
“What so proudly we hailed”

Mascots flip through the air
Takeoffs slap the wooden board—
On the other side
A haughtily-held head flashes a smile for the judge

Knotted muscles braided around bones
Protruding hips beat and rise above the spectators

Their heads circle round the bar
Silent concentration.

Resined feet claw the beam
Poised arms grace extended angles
Scores flash at smudged mascara eyes

Crisp blue carpeting
Precise boundaries separating pressure from relief
Cushions the landing of the gymnast
Playing to her music

Pressed in the mat—
Anxieties
Tears
Ribbons—

Smiles.