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Princess Kay Karen Bracken in a Butter Carton Dress, 1963

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PRINCESS KAY KAREN BRACKEN IN A BUTTER
CARTON DRESS, 1963

Dead center in the photograph
she balances on kitten heels,
the regent of her antique frame.

The scruff grass tickles her white heels
and reaches for the cardboard hem
where overlapping text proclaims

Milt's Dairy proudly on her skirt—
the chorus nips in where it meets
the bodice of her cardboard dress.

This dairy princess, '63—
so regal in her empty field,
she hardly seems preposterous.

Although a storm is coming in
she simpers for the camera lens
with every shade of artlessness,

composed, and poised as if to say
she'll bear with utter confidence
the burden her perfection is.

Dark regiments of careful waves
march solemnly across her scalp,
a cushion for her velvet crown:

its tiny tridents proud the clouds,
and to her proffered china plate,
the absurd rain comes beading down.