

Fly in the Air

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. . . strafes the dinner party guests but does not land, cuts through the invisible gases jagged, and its dull wail is the buzz of its camera recording their thoughts, slim blonde thinking creep, creep, why did he sit next to me, he knows I don't like him, he can sense it, it's palpable, creep, why won't he take the hint, unhh, did he feel me shudder as he brushed my hand, hope he did, hope he rots, why would someone do this to himself, does he not see himself as a predator, slightly drunk older man to her left, it's so sad I love her so much, such a gentle voice, such a lilting, lifting chin, torture to sit next to her and know her heart is flint, you could bruise your hand striking it, she doesn't love me nobody loves me understands me, sorrow swimming, drowning in roiling pools of booze all evening, lonely, torture—there, when I touch her she flinches, she's repelled, cruel beauty, cold, unyielding, and it's all too amusing: the dialogue of grimaces, dance of aversion and exquisite self-pity, for the hostess seated across from them both, who made no formal seating plan, but hoped it would turn out this way, he would leap at the chance to sit next to her, monopolize her, that grating puppy whine in his voice, those brief displays of his pebbly little teeth, not a hope in hell, gritted smile of revulsion splitting her face, so entertaining for a hostess to watch the balls knock against each other on the pool table, so to speak, roll and rebound, to see this one begin that story again, for example, and the girl harassed by the creep feigns tremendous interest, but the storyteller's wife pretends not to hear, wishing they had not come, so he might not

expose himself again, before this superficial, bemused, reptilian yet pretty hostess whom the wife does not trust, he is too trusting, he wants too badly to be respected by these glib, happy party people, and so he never will be, but once, just once, he'd like to feel that she is supporting him, that she is on his team, that she finds what he has to say interesting and then they all will, it's so simple, if she turned on the radiance of her comfortable maternal smile in public as she does for him at home he would bask and dazzle in its sunshine, if she laughed out loud then his story would be funny, his voice would not ring pompous and tinny in his own ears, and also in the ears of the younger brother of the hostess who has come stag, who would really rather be home playing with his Nintendo, his "Retrorama" old school Wii game, only he clutches the joystick so tight for so many hours every day that strange, thrilling pains burrow tunnels, shoot through carpal tunnels in the joints of his fingers and along the rim of his hand, even now, a day later, as he lifts the cool, comforting glass, but when he shuts his eyes, he can see worlds of favorite games, enemies exploding, dispatched with calm and perfect shots, level after level of stone or knotty pine floors, high stone or brick walls, yielding before his steady stream of ammo, treasures plucked, refueling him, the backbeat pulsing . . . and the girl across from him, invited along as an afterthought and an offering, self-conscious because her dress has small flowers on it, why does this always happen, why am I always floral when all the other women are monochromatic and vice versa, part of my karma, should have known better, for a dinner party, could that possibly be why he won't give me the time of day, she notes his preoccupation and feels sad but not entirely regretful, for maybe she

inchoately senses how he loves that home system, how he loves most playing with his own, warm joystick, prefers it to making it with girls, and that's the sad truth the insect gleans as it hovers and threads its way through space, hairy legs tucked into abdomen, wings frenzied, mesmerized by the menagerie just like the hostess, with far greater insight into her ugly striated gray matter and all the gray matters she has summoned here, causing consternation and the waving of hands and napkins, the hostess annoyed because it is an indoor private party and the insect presence conveys the opposite of all Martha Stewart has said the atmosphere should contain.

It lands on the wall at last, silent and forgotten immediately, hopping and walking the rough linen wallpaper surface, washing its hands and face more quickly and dextrously than even a squirrel might, turning its flexible head on its axis slightly, now totally objective, "And that's the myth the major media still cling to, the illusion that they are objective, that's what we all aspire to, and it's so dishonest in the end," the pompous husband says, and his wife sneaks a furtive glance at her watch and exchanges a look of commiseration with the girl withering under the attentions of the self-pitying creep but the fly on the wall can no longer view their craniums as windows, at this distance all skulls are opaque beneath their hair, until it takes to the air once more, again dipping its delicate legs into consciousness streams brackish with alcohol, shooed absently as it weaves and rises, gazing down on the heads as on a necklace of round baubles, lazy and omniscient, jewels kaleidoscoping in the compound eye of God . . . □