

Eleanor Levine

Thysanura

Gray nymphs
crawl on the ceiling
Mother says it is dust,
my dust, that makes
the silverfish
dance rapidly
propeller toes
in corners
where you can't
quell them unless
they pose naked under
a light and
we squash
the insides
with a grin

Minnie

moist as baked salmon
a verse from
William Carlos Williams' last meal
my Mother knew Minnie
and her husband Moe
with ruby whiskers
who lived in a brick building
near Red Moon Pizzeria
and Lane Drugs
"Minnie Mouse has rubber lips,"
I said when Mom made me visit
we brought diabetic chocolates
& a quart of milk
to her apartment, which smelled
like grey hairs in the medicine cabinet
we sat in the dark
Minnie didn't use a lamp
she and Mom spoke
about matzo
eggs and
the items on sale
at Shop Rite
that week
when Minnie died
we no longer
went to her place
near Jamesway
where Welfare recipients
made glamorous purchases.

The Follower

He was her Jesus Christ
and she was his apostle

Together they sang about
fecal matters and other elements

In the backyard that she
ate or killed, such as squirrels

or rabbits who trampled on
the wrong side of the tree

whenever Jesus left for work,
the disciple would whine for

hours at the window in the living
room and await the cream cheese

and bagel that Hilda (his mother)
offered as communal fodder for

her poor digestive system, which
had pancreatic difficulties that even

Jesus couldn't cure, although they
tried numerous remedies that cost

about \$12,000, where Eastern met
Western medicine in the vet's office

Finally, she stopped breathing and
biting as well as she had and he

could no longer find the teeth marks
she always left on his hands.

The Eighth Commandment

A born-again Christian
who shared Mom's hospital room
stole her underpants.

Between oxygen inhalations and
her daughter's visit, the woman said,
"Jesus will look after you—
needn't worry about the
future or your heart."

Reading *Matthen*, *Mark* and *Luke*
the elderly lady, who had dialysis,
reached into Mother's cupboard

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"Can you forgive her? I'll buy panties
at Walgreens."

"That's not the point," Mom proclaimed,
"it's *what* she's done that so disturbs me."

