

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

\*

"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."

## At Delicious Orchards<sup>1</sup>

humming since the Pharaoh  
first stored colonies  
in a desert apiary  
black-eyed peas dancing  
on hexagonal wax vestiges  
hung from bellybuttons  
off their momma  
*zzzzzzzzzzzz*  
spinning headlong  
into each other and their  
vast nest of Christ-like  
followers who merged  
year round  
even when snow  
covered our feet  
we knew  
it'd mean ripples  
of flesh  
bitten by  
brown and yellow tenants  
if you threw  
a rock into their  
condominium

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<sup>1</sup> At Delicious Orchards in Colts Neck, New Jersey, in the 1970s, they displayed a glass beehive case with hundreds of honey bees.