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Family Dinner

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Allison Martin

Family Dinner

Grandma and Grandpa Jacobson are paying
for their four children, their spouses
and eleven grandchildren
to go on vacation with them.
Eighteen people—all results of
their fifty years of marriage.

The first night, we all go
out to eat. Three tables
pushed together end to end
like a long pole.

Aunt Angela whispers her secret
to Uncle Steve on her left.
He tells Andy who tells Elise
who tells Jim who tells Colin
who is five and doesn't quite
understand the game of telephone.

So the telephone line is strung clumsily
from one elementary-aged grandchild
to the next and around the table to me:
"There's going to be another grandchild in March!"

I whisper the secret to Aunt Nancy
who tells her husband Tom.
He pretends she's the one expecting
and calls her by her maiden name.

Finally, the secret reaches Grandma.
She gets excited with the idea
of the game, letting the importance
of the secret slip away, and turns

to her left to tell Grandpa about the
coming member of the family
as if she was solely responsible for the child
and has single handedly linked us
all together with this telephone wire.

Grandpa listens, bent like a wind-beaten tree
over his plate, and cuts the seafood special
slowly to keep the knife steady.
His white head lifts up gradually
like a mist rising off the water,
and he leans over to tell Uncle Dave.

Icarus

It starts with a silly dream—
Orville and Wilbur found a way to the sky,
so why shouldn't I if I just wish on the right star?

And while the night stretches on
I bend over a jar of wax,
forming and molding it as the moon
dubiously looks down, wondering
what fool invention this human is making now.

The moon man, full of doubt, starts
making jabs at me—barbs to pierce
the wax wings. He's trying to save me
from a long fall tomorrow, no parachute
to float me to the ground. He knows
the jealousy of the sun. If he can stop
my dream tonight, shine brighter
than the stars so I forget all about wishes
and just go to bed, he can save me.
He failed to save Icarus.