Icarus

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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 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.