

What's missing from their bodies is nothing compared to what's missing from their heads.

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

What's missing from their bodies is nothing compared to what's missing in their heads. One man in particular, now almost 80. Wakes to the smell of napalm, cigarette smoke, gasoline. Is he still feverish? Will the fungus rot his foot? But he remembers he's an old man in South Florida, and time has healed nothing. Not the stories or the wounds. Instead it has wrapped them up in a silk cocoon, which binds the ragged edges, but always, the fluttering of unborn wings. A gypsy moth. The large wings powdery and almost translucent. A creature of things best forgotten, because language always dies in his mouth. He gets his coffee in his quiet, Spanish-tiled kitchen. Lets out the dog. Fries an egg. Somebody died that night, that's for sure. Saw him wheeled out on a gurney, zipped up for eternity. The cumulus clouds boil over his head, and the sun is a benediction.

