A speck on the wall

by Matt Briggs

I don't want to be a fly. My mother told Brad, her boyfriend of nearly the entire time I was a teenager, that it was time they cooled off and maybe thought long and hard about what it meant for them to be together. You talked to Kathy, he said. I have thoughts of my own, and even if I did talk to Kathy, she is my own flesh and blood and I'm likely to take her council concerning something as serious as this. She filled you with ideas. I have my own concepts, my own direction, and it is precisely this sort of accusation that has produced in me a lingering addiction to Maker's Mark and a strident aversion to hearing you ascribe to me my own motives and interior thoughts processes, because despite your claims otherwise, Brad, you have never been able to read my mind. You drink too much. I drink too much because of you and your smell and if I'm drunk enough, I can ignore that stench of animal musk you bath in and the little song you are always humming under your breath softly enough that you think that no one notices it, but I notice, and I can tell that it is the “The Ocean” by Zeppelin and for your information, Brad, no one except fourteen-year-olds in 1984 listen to Zeppelin. Are you drunk now? I'm fortified with my conviction to see that you pack your things tonight and take your Oldsmobile and your RV to the trailer park where you belong. I pay rent on this dump. I own the roof on this place even if the bank owns the foundation, and it passed the inspection and would be a home if you had not turned it into a prison, but as the owner of these four walls I can dismiss the warden. How drunk are you? I'm leaning into my freedom and will have you take your portable prison with you and you can set those four walls across town. You've had a psychotic break. I'm breaking with the psychotic if that is what you mean.

Brad packed his things into his three suitcases and drove away in his Oldsmobile. My mom and I lived in the shadow of his RV for three days. In the darkness when the moon set, I could hear it spit and groan and the beige box covered in streamers of sea moss eased

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out into the dark cul-de-sac. I wish I had been a speck on the wall when she said what she said. Because I don't want to want to be a fly.