Table Talk

by Tina Barry

My mother tells her friend on the phone about my father's latest misdeeds: he's lost money at the track, meant for my brother's tenth birthday party, a no-big-deal family thing at a diner, but still. Her voice gets screechy as she talks of the boy he was caught fondling in the bathroom of a bowling alley. The worst part: the dumb schmuck doesn't even bowl. I don't need to hear the flat ah-has and hmms of the listener to know she's not interested. Mother sits at the dining room table, legs thrust underneath, a filmy nylon nightgown brushing her knees, her calves dry and scratched. I'm stretched out beneath the table watching her feet rub together like another pair of fussing hands.

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