

back. As he capped the jar, he asked Bobby plainly for no more interruptions. Bobby moaned his answer into the pillow.

Sometime after midnight, when dew began to form on the balcony, John and Kathy moved into his room to lie in the dark, propped on pillows on his bed, and have another drink. He did his whispering in the curve of her shoulder, and she replied by small, expressive movements of her body against him. He had just asked her if she would like one more drink, and she had just signaled *yes*, when Bobby's bed made a sound, and he loomed small in the doorway. "I'm going to vomit," he said.

John half rose, then checked himself and lay back. "Do it in the toilet," he said.

Bobby disappeared, and there were sounds of coughing and crying from his bathroom. Then water ran for a time and stopped. He reappeared in the doorway. "Really, Uncle John, I'm very ill." His voice was furred and broken. "I'd better have a doctor come."

"You don't need a doctor."

"Maybe he does need a doctor," Kathy said.

"Lord, is she *still* here?" Bobby said.

John was up and to the boy at once. Guiding him firmly by his thin hot arm, John moved him to his bed and forced him down on it. "Here's the Noxzema. Use it yourself. And don't open this door again, hear?" Bobby screamed into his pillow, and shook the bed with his trembling.

John closed the connecting door loudly enough for the boy to hear it over his screaming, and met Kathy standing concerned at the foot of the bed. He kissed her hard, and she inhaled through her nose in surprise. Then he gave her a fresh highball and sat her on the bed beside him. "Hush a minute," he said. The boy's keening and sobbing came plainly through the door. John took up the telephone and gave the operator a Tulsa number. While it rang many times, John rubbed Kathy between her shoulder blades. "Hello? Hello, Francy? John. You awake? Yes, I know it's late. Goddamnit, I know it better than you do. No, he's all right . . . Listen, Francy. Listen. I know what's wrong with your marriage. . ."

FLY

by W. S. MERWIN

I have been cruel to a fat pigeon
Because he would not fly
All he wanted was to live like a friendly old man

He had let himself become a wreck filthy and confiding
Wild for his food beating the cat off the garbage
Ignoring his mate perpetually snotty at the beak
Smelling waddling having to be
Carried up the ladder at night content

Fly I said to him throwing him into the air
But he would drop and run back expecting to be fed
I said it again and again throwing him up
As he got worse
He let himself be picked up every time
Until I found him in the dovecote dead
Of the needless efforts

So that is what I am

Pondering his eye that could not
Conceive that I was a creature to run from

I that have always believed too much in words

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