

# Awake

*Elaine Terranova*

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Last night I dreamed I was awake. An excess of consciousness, maybe. I dreamed I was in a war. Wars now are fought in deserts though how can there be a war in a desert? You have to hide behind trees in a war. Or maybe that's only tag. I dreamed one army was cutting branches from the tree in front of the house and wood was flying through the window. The blanket weighed down my bones. I dreamed there was a sleeping boy in my lap and I couldn't rouse him.

# Plastic

*Elaine Terranova*

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He put the plastic into the wood stove fire. No, I told him. It was the plastic center of the cardboard pie box. Tear the plastic off first, I said. It winged my nose. My leg began to swell. My hair pricked. Don't, I told him. It could only burn as itself, unnaturally. It wasn't natural. (See, my neck won't turn, I said.) Not burn the way the rest of the pie box burned. It smoked my lungs. Not eagerly as the rest of the cardboard pie box burned. But it couldn't stop itself entirely, any more than the birds outside could stop calling after each other when it got dark. I breathed it in, plastic eye that uncovered the pie. I swallowed it, the pie eye, center that looked down into the pie through the top of the cardboard pie box top. It feathered in the fire into ash. No, I told him. My temples pushed inward to meet in the center of my skull as a plastic acrid bird of fire lifted into the air.

# Fireflies

*Elaine Terranova*

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I am beside a lamppost and a cone of light falls like dust over me. It is a late summer evening, hot and sticky, but I like how I feel, moist skin cooling. The fathers have come home, climbed up the steps that cut through high lawns to the white, frame houses, and I am allowed out for a little after dinner. I hold something in my cupped hand and make a little opening between my thumb and index finger. Even away from the lamppost, I can see the glow. My brother Sidney has given me a jar with holes in it and grass on the bottom. I rush inside to find it and put the thing in. I set it on a windowsill and watch its message of off and on beams. It beats against the glass. What I want is the light though. That's what makes it different from other bugs. If I take it out, I can keep it to look at by itself. The light is beautiful, I think, but not the bug. And I do and Leo, my oldest brother, comes over. I can tell he is a little horrified. You killed that insect. It was alive and now it will be dead. Is that what you want? I want the light. I want it to be mine, to belong to me, so I don't have to be scared of the dark in my room anymore. I stare at the fluttering thing in the jar, the tiny yellow ball on the windowsill that's already dimmer, until I get so sad I can't bear to look.