

## Sometimes Picnickers Gaze Into the Heavens and See Large Ferocious Animals

I prefer more earthly hallucinations. When my mother was still a young girl, she collected various insects—ladybugs, stink beetles, mosquito hawks—in a small jewelry box. She buried them in the rhubarb patch and she never saw them again. She had been careful; she had marked the spot with a large flat stone, a small Italian flag her father had smuggled back from the war. No matter how deep she dug there was only more dirt.

Years later, I came home one night at 2 a.m. to find my sister and mother shivering. They were out on the front lawn huddled together under a thin blanket. My mother was muttering something fierce about how the moon had such evil faces. My sister was silent, with her finger she traced the outline of my mother's cheekbone. I brought them another blanket and sat with them until they were warm again. It was all I could do.

Once when lying in the garden, I noticed how at the ground level the garden wall and my line of vision conspired to cut the row of daisies in half. Instead of four petals, now there were only the top two. I stared at them this way for a good fifteen minutes until I felt my eyes were about to water, until those petals became something other than petals, until they looked like two lovers leaning in together for kiss, like my grandmother and grandfather must have looked when the war ended, on that night eight years later when they made my mother. Only then did I look up.