

BAKED PEANUTS

for Mervyn Morris

The kitchen smelled of cookies when we ducked
the sheets. The set ran
the end of a cricket match, BBC
news. Helen unfolded a tray table's
legs. I flicked the Red
Stripe's sweat. On the end-table: a coffee
mug steaming, a pile of unopened
envelopes, a phone.
On the wall: shadow cupped the sockets where
the mask cast, the white plaster hollowed, wood
door bolted and barred
by a massive latch. The oven buzzed, bowls
filled and set, the shells singed with brown and black
pocks. Crack, skin slide, pop
the halves on the tongue. "Don't worry Matthew,"
a red skin tumbled to the tile, "that
happens to me all
the time." Fan blades pushed it, scratching beyond
my tips. We dropped the 'e' from *enjambement*,
French now English. What
were we after when we pulled two copies,
the concise, the unabridged O. E. D.?
Pronunciation
number two escaped us with mixed laughs. Was
it the origin? The French *Rejet*? Had
we gone further would
we have found *encabalgamiento*?
Versuberschreitung? The act says go on.
The effect? To scissor.
The rain did not end. A lift to the strip
mall and when we passed the American
fortress' high walls
its flag sagged in perpetual half mast.

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