

# THREE BLIND ETC.

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MATTHEW SALESSES

**My mother sent me some Asian chain email** before lunch with a list of bullet points praising Korean moms. She always did this, voted her choice of topics; Dad had let slip that she didn't trust my civility anymore. I had accused her (*one* time) of thieving my childhood, forty-five minutes after she brought up my love life. The things she said would crawl into my invisible spaces, you see, like mice, waiting for a crumb to drop. Our problem was she didn't connect what I said later with what she said earlier, and I didn't say it right away because I actually cared. Over lunch this time, after the *blah blah* about Korean moms, it was a complaint against the wifely woman. Even Dad chimed in: "She's just Chinese." I'd almost forgotten he was there until that "just." "Close enough," I said to piss them off. The entire time, they had ignored what I'd told them about having a son I didn't know I had. Dad had gotten drunk. At the end of the meal, Mom mumbled, "A bastard child." You see where I got my mice.

# FOR THE RECORD, I WAS NEVER FOOLED

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MATTHEW SALESSES

**I went to pick up the cake** thinking about the boy's two sad friends and two sad moms who didn't want to be there but sacrificed. I'd left the wifely woman with them. She had no obligation to the boy, at least legal. But the motherly potential. The boy could see it, too, you could tell. He let her dress him. On the drive, the windshield was covered with pollen. The cake decoration contained ninjas with bleeding swords, the victims outside the frame. The two friends would like that; we had let the boy be boy. The mothers were beside the question, or out of the point. On the cake, sixth was spelled *sexth*. I glared at the teenagers behind the counter. "A bit obvious," I said, but I was late. I decided against trick candles.

# IT'S NOT MY FAULT, IS IT?

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MATTHEW SALESSES

**I saw Randy** in Shaw's swapping out large eggs for extra large. I tried to turn before he saw me, too, with the boy. "Who's this?" he asked. I said, "You save what, forty cents?" This was the suburbs. But I could see he was thinking the same: the burbs. I didn't know how to explain: he was my best friend but the boy was my best secret. I hadn't even known he existed until recently. "I'm six," the boy said. It was just his birthday. He was relieved he'd lived another year. He was a scared little boy, was what I knew. "Chickens come out of those," he said. Randy said, "Not out of these. Chickens lay two types of eggs. These don't have any babies in them." The boy started to cry. He was inconsolable.

# THEY CALL TIME 'FATHER'

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MATTHEW SALESESSES

**And then it was summer again** and the remnants of shells shimmered on the sand. When they washed up something had died inside of them. I remembered the summer before, when the boy was sadder and happier. He was evener now, we hoped. He was six and his mother's death was a sixth of his life ago. He followed the wifely woman into the water. She picked up a shell and he picked up a shell behind her. This was his latest habit, which I thought kids grew out of earlier. I lay on the beach wanting to shut my eyes on his mimicking but not shutting them. I didn't know how the wifely woman had gotten such a grasp of him. She put her shell to her ear. He put his to his ear. But they were just clams. Later the two of them came back wet and dripped on me and the wifely woman teased me for being dry. The boy didn't seem to know why he was dripping.