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Green! The color of the sweet rushing pee of a child, a pale and robust flow, hint of hard gold, clear like the lucidity of a young mind, sharp with a slight tang and not a hint of bitterness. Green! The color of early riesling or, greener still, apple schnapps frosting a glass, a slice of apple-flesh refracting in its glow. Green, the color of new leaf in late spring, lumpy and sprung with spider eggs in proliferation too great for its host, a green that would soon turn crackling dull and brownish red, the bad blood of arachnid birth in the throes of climate change, a garden hedge its common casualty.

The people were milling around in the late September evening, gently swatting at the gnats which had arrived in abundance over the long days of summer and which, thriving in the well-watered lawns and warming days, had never gone away. As they stood together, waving their arms against the swarm, the people could enjoy the late sun glinting on the waists of their glasses, glasses tall and lean and bubbly, or inverted cones of sheer and sweaty translucency, or of luminous blue, pink, gold, green. Occasionally a colored liquid would catch the rays of the sun and project them gleaming onto the stuccoed arches of the house—a rainbow of sunsets, cocktails at dusk.

There was a permissiveness apparent in everything that evening: the banter, the spillage, the slurps, the colors, the bugs, the glowing last light glinting on the Los Angeles air, then, after dark, the abundance of subtly designed lighting throughout the garden, the warmish water of the pool, its vapors wisping at the meniscus of infinity, as at last the evening air cooled. Voices rose up and the squeals of children punctuated the patter of concern as it came in waves through the crowd. Heads nodded, and glasses emptied. It was a traditional cocktail party in an LA fall.

So as the late sky greened from cerulean, flicked with the very last of the pink, and as the gnats thrived and hummed in the darkness and as the people gesticulated back and forth, heels sank deeper into the softened earth beneath the grass's plush pile. To save their wedges, stilettos and platforms from excessive stains and, to save themselves the literal embarrassment of being stuck-in-the-mud, the women moved their weight to the balls of their feet. Their calves flinching and stretching, they shifted ground in a two-step rhythm like line-dancers warming up, or boxers or tennis players or like someone containing their annoyance. They leaned forward, as if ready to step, or strike, or run, but only ever so slightly, as if not wanting to announce the fact, lest the opposition glean their intentions. Their words were like that too: emphatic, earnest, forward leaning, almost breathless, but cryptic and to all but the keenest observer inscrutable. They spoke excitedly, completing each other's sentences, yet the sentences were full of an ambiguity only they seemed able to penetrate. Their eyes glistened

and shone. The shadows deepened and the remaining garden lights came on and the drinks were drunk, and the people too, and still the women were restless and still they moved in their way to keep those heels from sinking, and to keep their hearts and minds from sinking too. The talk went on into the evening, ebbing and flowing and circling back around to the topic at hand.

Further from the main gathering, on the far side of the garden, a girl squatted, observing, through the pool fence, this evening scene. In one deft movement she stepped aside, and with a shake of her body, pulled up her pants and zipped up the fly of her jeans. Unobserved, she stood up from the bushes where she had squatted and stepped back into the party.

'Does your mother know you do that?'

She started and turned to put a face to the voice. His was the last to arrive, an unfamiliar one at that, faintly luminous in the lantern light, sullen, and without animation. His eyes were as dull as the dead hedge. How had he got so close, so quickly? She disliked his skulking, his impudence. Who was he to ask her anything? Instinctively, she waved at the waiter, calling him over while saying to the Stranger (who does he think he is), 'You don't seem to have a drink, let me fix that for you,' in as grown-up a voice, as much like her mother's, as she could muster. He lowered his chin, suddenly aware of his conspicuousness. She was about to say something more when one of the women ran—barefoot at this point—from the house into the yard, slamming the screen door behind her, calling everyone to 'Come look, come look!' When the girl thought about it later she wasn't sure if the woman had added 'It's happened!' or 'Look what's happened!' but in any case in a moment all attention was fixed to the screen in the kitchen and to the unfolding news. A cry went up, a cheer, then a popping of corks. It was difficult for the girl to see the screen for the throng of people suddenly inside and, besides, she wanted to keep an eye on the Stranger, as she referred to him to herself, who was still hovering on the periphery. Suddenly there was shouting and anger among the guests and a woman dropped or threw a bottle of champagne to the ground, a scattering of green shards splitting the atmosphere into a hard brilliance. The crowd parted, the girl squinted against the suddenly visible bright kitchen lights but seized her opportunity. Green glass ground beneath her feet but now she could see the screen: the President and the Vice-President and the Secretary of State were dead. Karl Rove too. 'Huh. Very thorough', she thought to herself, transfixed by the image before her, and, unobserved, the Stranger slunk away.

Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Margaret Morgan.