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## Here's Something You'd Better Know

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LOWELL JAEGER

*Here's Something You'd Better Know:*

he says, *you gotta pinch a fly  
to make him dead. You swat 'em  
and think you got 'em.  
But you don't.*

He holds the hapless beast  
by the wings, shoves it  
six inches from my nose  
to show the legs still kicking.  
And squishes it like a garden pea  
between his fat thumb and forefinger.  
Tosses the corpse in a coffee can  
half full of its crushed brethren.

It's a backwoods bar  
somewhere almost Canada. Sort of  
a grocery store too. And gas station.  
All jumbled. Motor oil stacked  
beside a cardboard rack of packaged  
undies and socks beside potato chips  
next to fishing lures and laundry soaps.  
All of it dusted the same  
as the pumps outside and the bushes  
and pines along the gravel roadway.

I'd parked my butt on a bar stool,  
slammed a couple of shots for nerve.  
*Thawed some good baloney yesterday,  
how 'bout a sandwich,* he says  
and wipes his meaty hands on the bib  
of a greasy apron across his chest.  
Throws a half loaf of bread in a wide open  
trash bag behind the bar next to his can  
of trophy kills. *Damn mice,* he says.

Then he lights up an old TV  
hung high in a dark corner at my back,  
and I know for sure what I've come  
to do. It's a newscast, and smack  
in the middle of whittling mold off a block  
of cheese, he goes green and looks up  
at me, cheddar in one hand, kitchen knife  
in the other. *Say*, he stammers,  
*you're the guy... the guy that...*

What do you call that look  
like he knows he's swat? Falls  
face first on the baloney he'd sliced  
and laid out for my lunch. Bullet hole  
draining like ketchup. *Here's something*  
*you better know*. I pinch both hairy  
forearms. Less than a hundred bucks  
in the till. Grab a bag of chips. Two six-  
packs. Kick the door so the hinges  
won't close. Let the flies have their way.