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Dinner With Melanie

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Mina Kumar

DINNER WITH MELANIE

Your mind is a clean slate. You do not feel the pressure to be amusing that you feel with other people. No matter what you say, Melanie will respond blankly "that's good, honey." This frees you to experience your dinner more keenly. You note the way the white tassels hang from the ceiling, the discordant note struck by a busboy's mudcloth vest, the soft thud of your spoon falling to the ground. "Are you just going to sit there like a bump on a log?" Melanie says, finishing the wine. The waiter winks at her. She smiles back, calls for the check, pays, leads you to the bodega. You don't think about what she is about to buy, maybe dessert, or toothpaste, or cigarettes. She buys a 40-ounce beer. Once in her apartment, she strips down to her underwear. You sit on the couch, under a framed Ralph Lauren Safari ad. She sits on the other end with her beer. She lights a joint, turns the t.v. on. Arsenio Hall. The air-conditioner's blast makes your legs prickle. You cross your legs, lean your head back. Your mind is a clean slate.