

MARGARET DIESENDORF

WAR AND PEACE

For Mark

We play table tennis . . . My service is precise.
The shots fly across the net and strike home; today
I play like a sharpshooter. I hit the target.
Out of my wrist looms death. Twenty, thirty shots to
and fro; I jump left, right (what a rally!) until
one fails at last and the ball rolls into also
fiercely blooming azaleas.

“You got your eye in,”
says my admiring son, “are you taking revenge
on an innocent?”

I laugh. An innocent? As
I hit hard, my subconscious is in sympathy
with the hen in the cage, under the axe, the tree;
the seal in flight from the club in a human hand.
Ping! Pong! Somewhere on earth, two men drop dead. Arab,
Jew; a New Zealander, Parisian; or else should
they both be

South African? Could some personal
defeat be lurking in the wings? — This or that, I’m
glad to prove that there still is some fight left in me.

JEFF GUESS

THE MEETING

The fly
that fixed position
on the chairperson’s head
between
odd strands of hair
saw everything differently

threw a small shadow
like a mole
or something worse

worried
the minute secretary
more than a little
who missed
the exact wording
of an important motion

while the secretary
sketched a fly-swat
all down the long agenda

the seconder to the motion
noticed
picked up and rushed with
at the chairperson

who lifted from his seat
hovered in the air
and flew with fright

making a bee-line
for the wall and windows
smacked his head
against the glass

and squashed the fly.