

## The Land of the Moths

I awoke in the land of the moths. They were all asleep, their fragile wings overlapping, the gentle breeze rippling beneath them like an echo of flight. I did not move or make a sound, but reclined in the center, a circle of pure white radiating outward all around me without end. I myself was not a moth, but a man, and felt greatly out of place, like a shoe in a teacup. Overhead the sun shone down on us brightly, as if to enjoy its own splendor in reflection. As I lay there, my mind otherwise blank as the latticework of wings, a single thought arose in me that I must not disperse these simple creatures, but give them my song. I put my index finger against my front teeth and chewed away a dollop of flesh, which I silently swallowed. A drop of blood bloomed in its place like a rose. As it blossomed, it widened, and soon it was all I could do to preserve it intact, pointing my finger at the sky, absolutely vertical. The blood continued to rise. I could feel my eager heart delivering it, speaking in thunderous beats through the medium of my veins. As if I were carrying it on my wrist, I maneuvered my hand over the innermost rings of sleeping moths and tipped it slightly forward to inscribe them with flowing red words about love, about loss. I wrote the first verse of my upbringing, the fateful chorus of my adolescence, which I repeated at expanding intervals. I told the story of my wrong choices, my misdeeds, my desires for peace. I expanded the alphabet, adding letters that read backwards and punctuation that made sound. The moths did not awaken, they never moved. Except for the fluttering of the breeze under their wings, they showed no signs of restlessness. Rather, they absorbed my story peacefully, as if it were overdue rain, the sun drying it quickly so the content did not blur, did not bleed, though made of blood. I exhausted my arm span and found myself in the middle of a biographical bulls-eye. I looked beyond it at all the space left to write in if only I could reach. I considered walking outward, but the blanket of moths offered no path. I looked down at my finger and the blood was gushing up. It would not wait. I reached over the first chapters of my story and my arm grew outward from my body. My finger stretched and stretched. I was able to write anywhere I wanted and I filled up the new expanses of living parchment with declarations of hope and humble notions of wisdom. The end of the moths occurred suddenly. I was writing of my death and I noticed I was running out of room, not with my eyes, but because I felt sleepy. My heart emitted one final burst of song and sank into a slow, tribal rhythm. I pulled back my arm and it resumed its normal proportion. I sat down in the center of the moths and surveyed my work, which stretched in every direction. Having discharged it so quickly, I was tempted to read some, at least the first verses, but they seemed so irrelevant suddenly, and my body longed for rest. I lay down in the position in which I had awakened, never knowing how I got there. As I sank into sleep, an involuntary holler flooded my throat and burst irrepressibly from my lips. Above my weary darkening eyes, like a last glimpse of soft static, the disturbed moths scattered my fleeting record to the four careless winds.