

Portrait Of A Party

In the corner, a malnourished woman holds a martini glass, from the tilted rim of which dangle three elongated tears. Her mouth is open. Is she finishing a sentence or preparing for a sip? The color in her cheeks is extreme. "Yet you look better than ever!" declares the man on her right, who wears a corduroy blazer with patched elbows. He is smoking a pipe, and enjoying the action. The grizzled mouthpiece is an extension of his forefinger, which he points at the woman.

The light originates in a lamp above the center. Its stained glass casing contains a glowing panorama of undulating mountains. There is not a jagged edge in the scene. Beneath the lamp, a man in a fisherman's sweater scratches his chin, where a white beard hangs. His bald head glows a fierce shade of purple. The man is either considering the heat source or listening to another man, with whom he does not make eye contact. The second man is younger, dressed in a cardigan, which suits him poorly. His pocketed hands distend the abdomen. Above his lip, a sparse moustache hovers like surplus snuff. The man's eyes examine his beer, which foams terrifically.

In the other corner, two women make physical contact. The shorter one, wearing a yellow beret, crinkling her nose, puts a casual hand on the biceps of the taller, whose nostrils flare. Perhaps in response, her head has recoiled on her neck, betraying a large Adam's apple. The shorter woman's eyes fix upon it. She looks hungry, as if waiting for promised items from the kitchen, next to which she stands. A light shines from the

kitchen, but only the barren edge of a circular table is visible. The corner of the refrigerator may or may not bear a magnetized bagel.

In the foreground, three children and a dog wrestle over a biscuit. The dog is a spaniel. Its ears bounce wildly, so much to the amusement of the youngest child that he falls over laughing, his spine curled into the letter C. Behind him, his sister does not suspect his arrival. Her face billows forward like a sail receiving strong winds from inside her skull. Her expression is one of rapture. Her green eyes practically ingest what they behold--namely, the dog, who bears her teeth at the tauntings of the older brother. Dressed beyond his years, he holds the biscuit before the spaniel's mouth, but must also be hitting the creature with his necktie whenever it tries to eat. The older brother's chest is thrust forward to accommodate the game, and he cocks his thin arm.

Beneath the reading chair, a toppled bottle spills surges of tonic water. In the background, an obstructed painting hints at the portrait of a party in which the guests are conversing. This touch by the artist is probably a subtle rebellion against the boredom of his contract. Also, he signs his name on the daughter's ass.