



# OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

MARCH 20, 2003

From the air, the desert  
is an open wound. It bleeds.  
We are at war.

We are home.  
An atlas open to Iraq  
rests on our living room table.

A candle is burning near.

Guests arrive.  
We open a bottle of wine —  
cook, sit down to eat,  
talk, tell stories, listen.

In the middle of the dinner party,  
a friend cries out, "My God —"

We turn around.

Army cutworms have invaded our home.  
Hundreds of them are crawling across  
the stone floor, over books, up on the couch —

What? When? How?

I grab a broom and sweep  
as many as I can  
into the dust pan —

They curl into balls  
on contact, bodies  
piled high, roll  
on top of each other  
t h r e a t e n i n g  
to spill over the edges.

Someone opens the door —

I hurry outside and broadcast them  
on the sand like seeds.

On my way back,  
I now see  
our house  
is writhing  
with worms;  
thousands upon  
thousands  
of worms,  
plump,  
fleshy troops,  
olive green,  
marching  
left-right,  
left-right,  
left-right  
up exterior walls  
on their way  
toward our roof —

Guests draw lines of salt  
across the thresholds of front and back doors.

We slam the doors shut.  
I n v a s i o n  
There will be  
no democracy here.

We turn off the lights.  
The lone candle flickers  
casting a trembling shadow  
across Iraq —

We are at war.  
We wait.  
Baghdad is burning.

The Army cutworms have burrowed in.  
— Terry Tempest Williams

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