

Clarinda Harriss

Mortmain

Gravity or Mother's soft little hand,
which one tips the pictures to all angles?
Which to be more scared of is hard

to say. Knowing a giant magnet herds
every legged thing by its ankles
is not without a subtle horror,

but to know Mother's been here,
dead and boldfaced as an Ingres
odalisque, to handle what's hers--

what's left of her weird hort-
i-culture, viney climbers inching
up the walls, those gilded, hirsute-

looking frames with familial harpies
trapped inside, abandoned by their angels—
it chills the healthy hormones

she also willed our way, Who can whore,
how happily give in to the ancient
pull and fall, when the witching hour

belongs, as it always did, to her.
She over-waters the spider plants
before she leaves. Every lover hears

the walls close behind her—hardly
the click of a husband's shotgun antsy
to kill, but still sufficiently horrid

to crumble to dust their hardest ardor.
They stumble into morning, shrunken.
Energy plays matter like a harp.



Photo: Joe Paczusi