The Bug

By Tommye Blount

lands on my pretty man’s forearm. Harmless, it isn’t deadly at all; makes his muscle flutter — the one that gets his hand to hold mine, or ball into a fist, or handle a gun. It’s a ladybug, or an Asian lady beetle everyone mistakes for a ladybug — eating whatever it lands on. My pretty man is asleep — at ease, or plotting like the bug. Or maybe the bug is a blowfly — eating my pretty man’s tan from his pretty arm. My man swats it without waking, as if he’s dreaming of an enemy, or me. When my pretty man isn’t asleep he’s got a temper.

No, he is not asleep. He’s wide awake and wants me to tell you I’m wrong. Blowflies don’t eat skin, they lay eggs on skin. He knows all about blowfly larvae. Napoleon used them to clean war wounds, my cold pretty man says in that pretty way, with his cold pretty mouth. He’s eaten plenty of bugs before. On night watch, over there. Over there, they’re everywhere.

Source: Poetry (January 2015)