

Game Night

by John Wentworth Chapin

Seven empty wine bottles huddled on the coffee table. “URGENT,” I said to my brother. He stared blankly at me. “URGENT,” I repeated. You can't say more in *Password*.

“I heard you,” he snapped. He stared at the burgundy dregs in his glass. I wanted to go to bed, but I wanted to win. Competitive and drunk.

“You're taking too long,” my mother said. If she said anything else, he would explode. I couldn't believe she didn't know that by now. He paused, long and deliberate, daring anyone to goad him.

“DELIVERY,” he said. I sighed.

“SOS,” his wife said to my mother immediately, barely a pause.

“HELP,” my mother responded. It was the right answer.

My brother glowered. “Delivery was a good guess,” he said.

“But it was wrong!” his wife chirped.

His eyes were glazed: the wine, the late hour, the competition. A bad combination. He and my mother looked at the next card.

“DOCTOR,” she said to her daughter-in-law.

“NURSE,” came the reply. My mother shook her head and frowned.

My brother stared at the card, again too long. He looked at me. “DOCTOR,” he said, nodding slowly.

“She just *said* that,” I groaned, my tone critical, bewildered.

“I know she just *said* that,” he snarled. “DOCTOR.” He nodded, persistent.

“You can't gesture,” my mother complained.

I took in a sharp breath. “NURSE,” I hissed.

He called me a fucking asshole before he upended the coffee table and sent the bottles clattering across the floor.