

**Lice-pickin' Party**  
**by Marianne Micros**

gathered together in someone's house or maybe a town hall  
mothers and children and a few fathers the children and  
maybe some adults have to wash their hair with special shampoo  
before they come they are asked at the door if they did so  
then the parents pick lice out of their children's hair with special combs  
they yell *egg* whenever they find one and groan when they find  
a live louse *hey come look at this one or can you help me is this  
an egg or not?* the richer people are uppity they look down on  
the waitress who is a single mom never married maybe she caused  
this infestation *lice prefer clean hair* she says guessing their  
thoughts a potluck supper is spread out on a table in the next  
room away from those ugly bugs occasionally someone washes  
her hands and has a carrot, a cracker with cheddar cheese, or  
a chocolate chip cookie the children want to run and play but  
are forced to sit while their heads are examined and picked at

once released children dash outside or head for the rec room  
some of them watch a movie on tv or play video games  
*don't put anyone else's hat on don't touch the waitress's son*  
mothers whisper to their children they flirt with the single dad  
offer chocolate brownies to the grandfather who is raising  
a rebellious teen

they pretend they never came here never had to clean out  
the sordid creatures from young heads and their own brains

never tell say this is a potluck supper everything now is clean  
as sterile as a newborn baby children can play now

until the next outbreak creeps in the monsters leap from  
head to head polluting sheets and towels and sofas  
keeping children home from school forcing adults to meet  
in this place of dirty secrets

tonight the adults will dream of things crawling in their heads  
through every hair

tomorrow oblivious children will play  
hug each other wrestle touch run scratch their heads  
when adults are not looking swap hats gleefully