

## TABITHA SOREN

*Nicholas*, 2012  
pigment print, 46 x 60 in



credit: Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles

## SCOTT HUTCHINS

# The Evolution of Desire

**M**y father clicked the button with his thumb, and “The Land of Make Believe” dropped onto the spinning turntable. The automatic arm jerked inward, then lowered itself precisely onto the record’s edge. A solo trumpet enunciated a few notes in our empty den. There was ice in the ice bucket, and my mother had made Chex Mix, which was waiting in a large wooden bowl on the coffee table. The music, the ice, the Chex Mix. These were the only indications my parents were doing something unusual that night—hosting a party.

I was home because I was being punished for something. I don’t remember what. But I was also allowed the latitude of being outside of my room, as long as I behaved. This flexibility was uncharacteristic of my parents—they were strict—but one night that week, on a late amble into the den, I’d found my father asleep on the couch, in a deliberate bed of sheets, pillow, and the double-ringed quilt. I asked my mother about it the next morning, and she looked stricken. I wouldn’t have thought of it again, except for the slight, foreign odor of permissiveness it left in the air.

When the doorbell rang I answered, welcoming the guests—the Becks, the Davises, the Clarks. And then, I was out of things to do. I couldn’t watch TV, because everyone was in the den, so I sat in the dark living room just off the entryway, and listened to the music of the adults talking—the low grumble of the men, the sharp punctuation of the women. Through the high half-pie of windowpanes in the door, I watched a June bug and a mayfly circle the porch light, mismatched, the last of their kind. I daydreamed of redeeming myself in my parents’ eyes—what had I done?—by welcoming more guests—forgotten guests, maybe—taking their coats, carrying the tray of food they brought high above my head into the lighted areas of the party, making the adults shake their heads in amazement. “That boy...”

“Are you okay in there?” My mother stood where the white linoleum of the hall met the living room carpet. “Do you want me to turn on the light?”

“No, ma’am.”

The doorbell rang. “I wonder who that is,” she said.

I had been imagining someone famous might arrive—President Carter, Mean Joe Green, Saint Francis—and though I had recently learned that magic was merely the