



TCU Journal of the Arts

eleven40seven

Fall 2012 Volume 8.1

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# eleven40seven

*tcu journal of the arts*

**FALL 2012**  
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VOLUME 8.1

“LET THE WORLD  
BURN THROUGH  
YOU. THROW THE  
PRISM LIGHT,  
WHITE HOT, ON  
PAPER.”

Ray Bradbury

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

The Texas Creative Underground shanghaied me on a stormy Thursday night. I remember, four falls ago, descending into the Rickel building basement, a First Year student, drenched and dazed. In that make-shift media lab, I found a strange and inspiring group gathered around a rain-stained pizza box—among them, Ashley Tambunga and Stephanie Scott, editor-in-chief extraordinaire(s) to-be, Kurt Hare, Tyler Yarnell, Marxist poet (anyone know where he's ended up?), and, of course, Dr. Curt Rode, our trusty faculty guide still today. That night was my first encounter with the little journal called eleven40seven and a group committed to celebrating art at TCU. Now, four years later, and at the opening of eleven40seven's eighth volume, I'm proud to say that the Creative Underground's spirit of social change and commitment to supporting the arts at TCU remains central to eleven40seven's ethos.

For this first issue of the eighth volume of eleven40seven, our editorial staff received twice as many submissions as in any past semester. Among the submissions, furthermore, we saw the most evenly distributed proportionality of genres in our history. Although I'm tempted to blame this success on the courage (or riotous stupidity) of our ad team and the dedication of a brilliant staff, I remind myself of what eleven40seven is: a collective expression of this university's creativity. Yes, this journal stands upon the shoulders of its past editors and designers. It stands upon the shoulders of all those at TCU who choose to come together to celebrate the arts. But more than anything, this journal stands upon the talent of its photographers, its writers, its artist, and its poets.

Flip through the pages of this journal and you'll find what constitutes only a small sample of the fantastic creative work that we received. Without a doubt, selecting these outstanding pieces out of an outstanding pool was the most difficult challenge of the semester. Among these picked pieces, the editorial team found an especially vibrant spark, some unnamable energy, the kind of luminosity shed only by talented artists in deep contemplation and engagement with their art. In my eyes, this issue stands at an exciting crossroads in the history of eleven40seven. You, the reader, in engaging with these works, animate TCU's creative culture and move us to a brighter future.

I sincerely thank you for choosing to celebrate the arts with us. Please don't forget to visit our website, [1147.tcu.edu](http://1147.tcu.edu), for the extended online edition of eleven40seven.

**BILL HAMLETT**  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

# SUMMER SOLSTICE

Tessa Salomone

Tessa is a sophomore Ballet major  
from Sugar Land, TX

We are compromised,  
sunflowers gazing upwards,  
following the light to stay alive.  
Our roots only deepen.

Sunflowers gazing upwards,  
we will refuse to set.  
Our roots only deepen  
as our stalks turn coarse.

We will refuse to set,  
rising taller, never looking beneath our petals.  
As our stalks turn course,  
our roots cannot keep up.

Rising taller, never looking beneath our petals,  
we do not know our shadows.  
Our roots cannot keep up  
as shelled seeds are spat out.

We do not know our shadows  
following the light to stay alive.  
As shelled seeds are spat out,  
we are compromised.

# EARLY MOURNING

Sarah Hatton

Sarah is a senior English major  
from McKinney, TX

As we sit and wait here, my mother  
With a soft sigh turns to the side

Breathing

Deeply as I hear the ring  
From her hand, and turn to see

Expecting what I had known to be

Only finding not what we wanted.  
My mother upset. Stay here

To remember.

But let us not remember what this morning was  
Our thoughts being the rhythm;

Although the song

Doesn't exist—

We forget what we wanted to  
Never being what we imagined

Without us; without words. Together

Sitting, waiting, taking  
What we forgot with us, forever remembering; mourning, but not

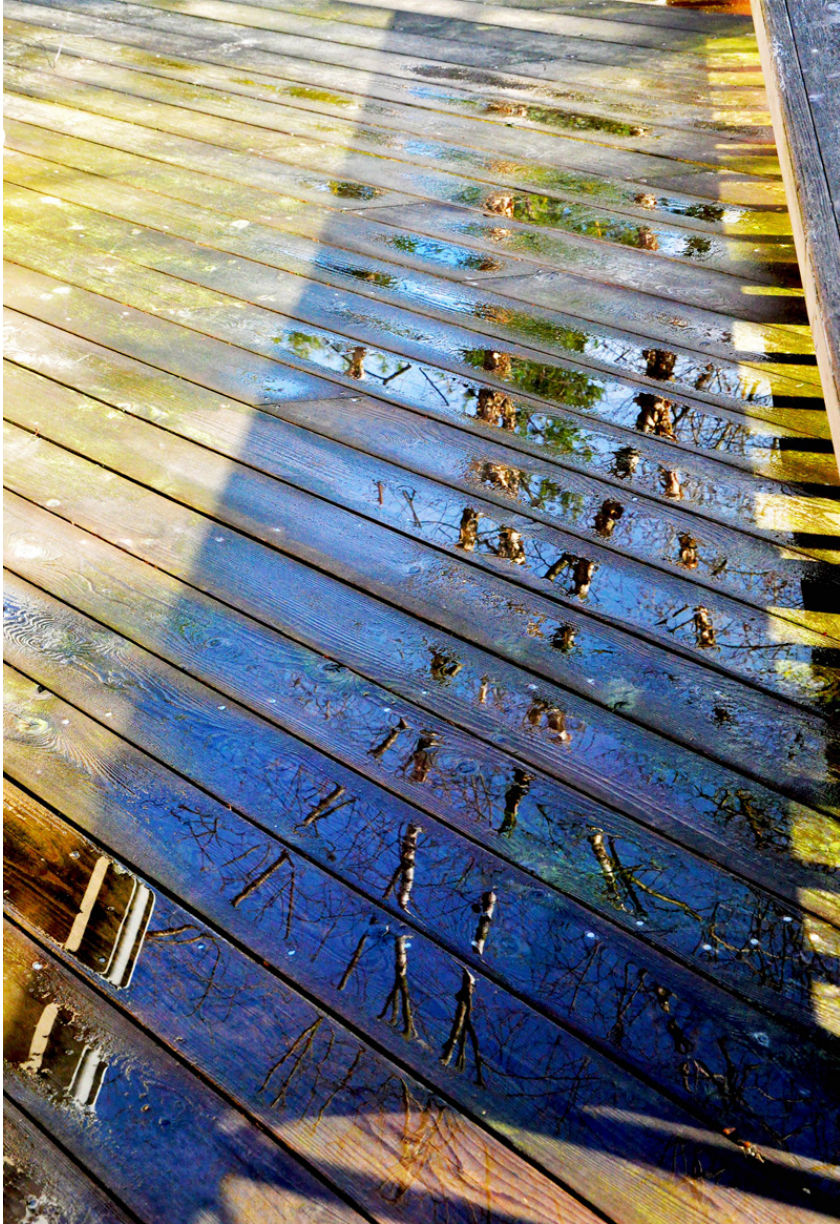
This morning.



# THROUGH THE EYE OF THE DECK

Amy Dondalski

Amy is a freshman Economics and Sociology major from Lake Forest, IL



# BRIGHTER LATER, FOREVER NOW

Luke Miller

Luke is a senior Writing major from Waco, TX

Gaia spins a pastel June,  
the backyard grass echoing the clarion call  
of the birds and the cicadas. The colors, neon  
against the soft-spoken sunset. A child laughs  
from down the street, wild and wide and free.  
The spray of a sprinkler and the sizzle of concrete.

The cold stings us,  
drags us through thistle bushes of family reunions.  
I smile and nod and wave, my fingers stiff from  
the Missouri weather, trying to conceal my contempt.  
No, Aunt Terry, I don't have a girlfriend.  
My dad pulls me aside, hissing, Hey, calm down.  
She's just asking a question.  
I know, Dad.  
I know.

There is always that - uncertainty.  
What if I let slip that my girlfriend's name is Paul this year?  
What if they ask? Do I tell them?  
How much longer will I have to mute myself,  
covered in colors I didn't ask for?  
And how will they react?  
I can only dread my eventual exile  
as I mask my isolation with eggnog.

When I was in Tokyo,  
I remember listening to the locals

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

\_ BRIGHTER LATER. FOREVER NOW \_

and looking up at the multi-tiered department stores.  
Rise, rise, that's all they do.

The people around me conversed in lace,  
their sentences matchstick structures.  
I'd quickly bow and duck into a  
blue-and-yellow-splattered half-price bookshop  
on the corner of the Shibuya Scramble,  
hoping to find a fellow *gaijin*.

Pedestrians start to wear less, smile more.  
Harajuku dances into the limelight again.  
Men shave, women carry smaller purses.  
The statue of Hachiko welcomes warmth.

Embrace me, my dreamscape.  
Bow cursorily, give me solace.  
Show me where to find myself, give me  
a place to hang my laundry out to dry.  
Allow me this smiling visage, these  
glimpses of the tops of shopkeepers' heads.  
Let me dance in your blank spaces.

A crack in the pavement, with a growth.  
The arm, lazily drooping out a dormitory window,  
that catches the plastic grocery bag.  
Country music languidly blankets  
a smiling duo playing Frisbee.

*Let's all get together,  
everybody.  
Let's all sing the sky.*

And the swans slide through Lake Kawaguchiko,

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

\_ BRIGHTER LATER. FOREVER NOW \_

Fuji looking over like a mother made of leaves.  
The cars grumble over the bridge.

Eurydice follows Orpheus in the forest beside,  
lyre bouncing from tree to bough.

If I can't make it to California...If I can't push through...  
You'll be lost to me, a fairy tale for grown-ups.  
Hell, maybe you already are. I don't know why I  
waste my time with this.

I am ice when I am in familiar climates.  
Abroad, I am a Japanese water droplet,  
touching down only once,  
solemnly joining a tender pool.  
One day, the West Coast will whisk me into ocean,  
bubbles peeling their joy into the Pacific.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star.  
How I wonder...

Entre la sombra y el alma  
Estoy gritándome a mi mismo  
Voy a ver mi camino  
Llegaré a ser mi cuerpo

Can I ever be happy without flinching?  
Does everyone feel that balloon, shaped like themselves,  
expanding under their skin?

Are closet walls the same thickness as the  
atmosphere with my family?  
I only know that in winter the air thins,  
and the statues shiver with trees.  
Each Christmas edges closer  
to the blossoming of the orchid.



I.

Zen. Rinse before I begin,  
Aloud, into a taptap (isthisthington)  
Microphone, in a sparse  
Church, at seventeen.  
Surrounded by  
Students with experience in  
College and condescension.  
They could say what they will  
About my performance, but I know  
I was coral on that stage, blossoming  
Into rigid pinks and brittlebony whites.  
I breathed kudzu into their ears,  
My mouth spiderwebbing them  
Into a temporal ecosystem.

The next day was a blur of  
*faggotqueer*.  
Dodging the  
Elbows, the  
Glances, the  
Slurs like a boxer  
Fighting past his prime.  
Huddling behind windows of hands  
And praying to God as I shot  
Holes in His moon that I  
Would make it to lunch that day  
Without dabbing blood or spit  
From my shirt.

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

I was a teenager like  
Roadkill is a martyr.

I made friendships with periods.  
Knives became handshakes,  
Coffins morphed into the  
Infinite embraces of old friends.  
Nooses were rough like  
The hands of lovers  
That I couldn't take  
To prom that year.  
Or any year.  
Caressing my face with that same  
Futile gentility.

II.

The town we lived in wasn't much, either.  
Days spent wishing for somewhere else,  
Nights wishing I were a mummy,  
Wrapped in gauze, if only to hide the bruises.

The kind of town  
Where people go to Wal-Mart  
For fun in high school  
Four times a week  
And nobody finds a thing  
Wrong with that.

They called it the suspension bridge for a reason.  
Guys would arbitrarily toss tortillas into the river  
With their girlfriends, and I would sink back  
And wait for them to turn around with the sun.

(poem continued on next page, stanza break)

*\_ W I N G S \_*

*Punch me in the jagged, I'd say.  
Throw me through your tough,  
I know you could.*

III.

They wanted me to monochrome  
My way through their existences.  
They would shade me with Sharpie  
Instead of Crayola. I was firework,  
Borne from the eye of Brahman  
And deadalive warm like a Chicago dove  
On an electric wire.

I ululated color and the clouds rained on.

IV

The person they knew passed, one day.  
Slipped from existence,  
A greased memory joining  
The greater Weaving -

People were shocked - not really.  
They came to the funeral, out of pity.  
Closed casket.  
Some wore yellow and stood behind.  
Their eyes exploded into  
Colorado summers, blotching  
Their desert cheeks.

I saw them as I stapled on my  
Tinkerbell wings,

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

*\_ W I N G S \_*

Never having felt like flying  
When my heart was gasping,  
When I was hum and throttle -

V

Don't cry too hard, Dad.  
I wasn't born for 8 millimeter.  
Just understand  
It wasn't your hand  
That cut me off.

I know you. I  
Am you, held down  
By layers of  
Toxic paint.  
I will become smaller with time,  
Eventually nothing more than  
A lone black-and-white  
Photo in your study.  
Facing away from you.

Don't cry too hard, Dad.  
Just redecorate over me.

VI

Fling open the blinds, Mom.  
Note the frosted dawn windowpane  
Taut against the sky.

Unfurl your son's footsteps  
As you glisten your routine.

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*



Gloss the personal effects,  
Define your space between.

Blizzard the town with gasoline.

## DIG TWO GRAVES

Rufus Lindsey

Rufus is a junior FTDM major  
from Lawton, OK

Comanche County's Parallel Forrest never looked more like the gaping mouth of Hell than on the night that I killed Jesse Sutton—the Oaks and Magnolias as gnarled teeth aching to gnaw on the remains of his flesh, and my vengeful soul. I pulled into a small clearing just inside the woods and parked there at about 3 a.m. I stepped out into the cold moonlight to survey my surroundings. There were only trees in every direction: tall, perfectly aligned trees. From a distance they would almost look pretty. Look at the forest from a quarter mile away on a warm summer's evening and it's a lovely picture. But it was November, the trunks and branches were leafless skeletons, and I had a monster to feed. I'd always been told that a woman lived in these woods, and that with her lived the Wendigo: a beast of Native American legend that can possess and feed on human flesh. This beast grants the woman healing powers so long as it can get its fill from a human sacrifice.

My mother had been comatose for nine months as a result of Jesse's reckless driving. He was racing one of his friends down Gore Blvd; she was pulling out of a local bakery with my birthday cake. The doctor's said there was no way she would wake up. I instantly pegged Jesse as who I would sacrifice to bring her back—his life for my mother's. The fact that he never even seemed remorseful just made it that much easier for me to knock him out and hog-tie him before he was due to leave for Thanksgiving break. He'd be present for dinner, just not one he expected.

I stood next to my car for a moment, nervous about the task ahead of me. For the first time in nine months, I started to question what I was doing. It'd never really been in my nature to carry out an act of revenge against another

## \_DIG TWO GRAVES\_

person. Any aggression I had was usually taken out on the football field or I'd pray about it on Sundays. I tried praying for my mom, but it didn't work. I burned a piece of Jesse's clothing and a lock of his hair in the name of the Wendigo, and the witch appeared in the most lucid dream I've ever had to tell me to meet her and her creature if I wanted my mom back. I took that as a sign that she did exist and that there was hope. If there was a sign from God for me to cease my planning, I didn't see it until after I committed the crime.

I stood dazed like I was waiting on the perfect time to go deeper into the wood. No time feels right when you know you're going to kill someone. I turned my head in every direction to make sure I was still alone. The moonlight reflecting off the sterling crucifix on my dashboard caught my eye for a moment, and then the cackling wail from the beast commanded my full attention. Icicles of dread dug deep into my diaphragm as I jerked my entire body around to face what had made such a noise. Nothing was there, just more trees and more fog than there had been when I first arrived. That shriek, that combination of screaming and laughing, had to have come from the Wendigo. No human could ever make such an awful noise. I realized I'd been standing outside for almost an hour. I had to get a move on before the monster got bored with me and decided to make some fun of its own.

I popped my trunk to find Jesse's groaning form staring at me. He'd been crying for some time, tears and blood from his head wound collecting on his letterman jacket's breast. I couldn't bear for him to look at me, so I wrapped a bandanna around his eyes and tightened the mouth gag. His tears wouldn't save him from any more pain than mine had saved me. Moving him proved arduous,

## \_DIG TWO GRAVES\_

but all those squats from football practice had to pay off eventually. I dragged him from the trunk where he met the stony ground with a grunt. I tied a length of rope around his ankles and began dragging him through the trees into Hell's mouth.

I trudged along slowly, not sure when or where the woman would appear, not sure if I would even make it back alive. I'd never met her or the Wendigo, but if they could eat one person and countless others before him, then what would make me special enough to leave unscathed? I continued for what felt like a mile. The scenery never really changed: dark trees in a perfect line in every direction. I turned, teeth waiting to bite down on me if I made the wrong turn. If I got lost in there I wouldn't make it home for days. I tried to keep a steady pace, but Jesse was heavy, years of basketball training adding to his frame; the further I walked the colder it seemed to get. I could see my breath break through the fog, and my limbs were becoming numb from the cold and the strain. It became harder and harder to block out Jesse's protests as I walked. His whimpers became increasing pathetic in nature. I started losing my drive as my watch read 4:25 a.m. I stopped and posted up against a large rock, thinking I would freeze there just when I noticed the monstrous silhouette not even 50 yards ahead of me.

The Wendigo moved toward me with a sickening sway, hips lurching side to side like a drunkard looking for a place to pass out. Not until it got within a few feet of me could I really appreciate its grotesque appearance. It stood on two limbs at the bottoms of which were hooves like that of a Bison. Its legs were lean, veiny, and each was about five feet long and covered in black matted fur. The torso was that of a large man, the sternum ripped open to



## \_DIG TWO GRAVES\_

expose the inside of the rib cage and the lacking of a heart. A pair of black lungs expanded and fell steadily within the cavity. The arms of the beast were covered in fur, killing claws just visible through the mass of hair. The head of the Wendigo was that of a giant deer, but its lips and snout were ripped off; so as it looked down at me it seemed to give a sickening smile with teeth that it couldn't conceal. I sat on the ground frozen, too scared to breathe or even think. I closed my eyes waiting to die. I listened, first to Jesse's deafening screams, and then to the laugh of the Wendigo as it tore through his flesh and chewed to its delight. I fainted just as the sun began to rise.

I open my eyes to see that I am in a pool of warm blood. I vomit and try to get my feet underneath me. I look around; all that's left of Jesse is a piece of his jacket sleeve and cross necklace. I cry for a while, partly for Jesse's family and mostly because I can't believe what I've done. This wasn't something that a prayer could undo.

I figure out where I am and race to my car as quickly as possible. I don't stop to look around or catch my breath—I have to get out of this beast of a forest. I finally break into the clearing where I parked and dive into the driver's seat. I start the car when I feel an ice-cold hand grip my throat and feel a soft whisper in my ear. I'll never forget what the witch told me: "My friend is satisfied. Your mother will wake up this evening, and tonight you will be back here with a lock of her hair for me. From now on when I call you, you will answer, or we will be hungry again. Serve me these following 9 months, and your debt to me will be paid." She opened the car door and was gone before I could even see what she looked like.

I got home and cleaned up just as my mom opened her eyes. The reunion was bittersweet. I could only think

## \_DIG TWO GRAVES\_

of the Wendigo and hear Jesse's screams as I held her. She would never know what I had done, but I'd always know that I was a murderer and that I'd made a pact with something from Hell. The doctor came to look at her and said she was fine. We ate, talked, and cried together, and then she fell asleep after a long day being awake for the first time. I grabbed my scissors and made sure I was quiet as I got the hair. I kissed my mother, tucked her in, and went out to my car to take the witch what she'd asked for. I sat in the driver's seat crying. There was no way I could save myself from this situation. I fed someone's son to a monster, and now I was using a piece of my mom to appease a witch. I put my crucifix in the glove compartment as I made the first of many drives back to the forest.

\* \* \*

It's been months since I first saw the Wendigo, and I've been lucky enough to evade it for now. Still honoring the witch's agreement, I head back to Hell's mouth when she needs me to do something. Usually she just wants me to leave some food for her in the clearing. Sometimes she wants chickens or cats. Sometimes she wants a thimble of my blood. I still haven't seen her face.

Try as hard as I might, I can never look at my mother the same as I used to. I've tainted her with the spirit of the Wendigo. I just cannot help but think that a purely malevolent force is all that's keeping her alive. Maybe it will get better with time, but for now I'm torn up inside. I've always heard that revenge is a dish best served cold, but it seems I've offered my own soul up on the platter.

# MARIONETTE

Amanda Foster

Amanda is a junior Writing major  
from Fort Worth, TX

*Hemorrhagic stroke in the cerebellum and temporal lobe.  
Posterior parietal cortex and premotor cortex affected.*  
The muscles on the right side of my body:  
A marionette cut from its strings.  
My mouth sags towards hell,  
My right shoulder is harpooned, dragged shrieking into the fire.  
My dominating hand does not dominate,  
But curls up as if in defeat.  
Too tired, I struggle for words,  
Lose my native language,  
Wander the labyrinth of lingo.  
A mute monster manipulates my tongue,  
Causing me to choke on the fur  
That seems wrapped in malevolence.  
Memories are a jelly jar I cannot reach.  
I am marooned by muscle,  
My logic liquefied.

*Significantly fractured vertebrae at the age of seventeen.  
Levorotoscoliosis of thoracic five through lumbar one.*  
My spine is as crooked as my smile.  
I wanted to be as graceful as my hands' movement.  
I wanted to look as if I was not walking,  
But floating through the air,  
As fluidly as that goddess of which you dream.  
I don't float. I st-st-stutter step on good days,  
And grasp my hips, grimacing in agony on bad ones.  
The twinges of torment throb in torture.  
Never a moment without searing pain.  
I am betrayed by bone,  
My base broken.

*(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)*

## \_ M A R I O N E T T E \_

*Shattering of the right eyeshelf and fracture of the pelvis.  
Hip dislocation and fracture of the left femur.*  
My ribs and my hip feud as to what is going to sit where,  
Sometimes they both win, hardheaded hip and heart holder.  
A demon wrenches my spine to the ground,  
Twin imps fight over my hips,  
Ripping skin to shards of dried carcass,  
Decimating bones to a fine, white powder.  
Wicked laughter echoes in my head,  
The harrowing hell-demons, a constant nemesis.  
I am faulted by frailty,  
My psyche shaken.

# MY SECRET TO TELL

Shelby Tsuji

Shelby is a sophomore Film major  
from Rancho Palos Verdes, CA



# ELECTRIFYING #4

Christina Catterson

Christina is a junior Interior Design  
major from Oceanside, CA





# EULOGY

Kendall Gilfillan

Kendall is a sophomore Religion and  
Philosophy major from Nashville, TN

I wrote about

the death and its beauty. I  
may have mentioned  
Blessed Assurance?

But I did not write  
about the unsightly.  
No, I wrote that on the  
seams of my brain and left it.  
And for much too long I suppose.

I did not write  
of the one who ran down  
the hall and let out that  
scream loud enough to wake  
everyone but you.

I did not write  
about the time I met eyes with  
your mother after you had  
gone—nothing behind them—  
but bags beneath them.

I did not write  
about having to call people-  
I cared about- to tell them  
and try to offer them Assurance?

I did not write  
about having to hold  
men my own age while they shook

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

\_ EULOGY \_

violently the notion that you  
were gone.

I did not write about it.  
But I thought about it.  
I think about

You.

# STEEL MILL IN MY HOMETOWN #2

Ethan Wang

Ethan is a senior Photography major  
from Chengdu, China



# MARK 9:14-29

Cassandra Castillo

Cassandra is a junior Creative Writing and Spanish major from Chicago, IL

Mutters moved across the space  
People, people packed within  
An open place—argument  
halts as His footsteps led here.  
Us sighing, sprinting toward  
Your rescue “if your able.”

You’re there, presence palpable  
Instinctive quickening pace  
Urgent sweaty skin toward  
You question what’s within  
him. My voice, it’s me you’re hear-  
ing inside the rabblement.

My dire, botchy babblement  
Fierce fear he’s incurable  
Shame! Must ask you: stay here?  
Remain in us and this case  
of Tim’s tight lips? Him locked in  
him; black grip garrotes his word.

Warring inward and outward  
All us in befuddlement  
My quiver rose again in  
begging! This, abatable?  
Our conundrum twists Your face  
Sick that such unbelief cries here

Authority outpours—I hear  
the hatred; you herald ward.

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

\_ MARK 9:14-29 \_

I smell war, or spirit chase.  
Chastened is the bemusement  
by Him. Unviewed, tangible,  
invisible weapons win.

His sweet, bright, boyish cheeks grin  
His figure feels fully here  
Grip released—voice audible  
My still palm pulls his head toward  
my chest, himself an easement.  
This caress is life enlace.

Within me I see a coward.  
Please hear what I meant.  
You teach no unbelievable;  
only foretaste of grace.



# THE WAR WITH MR. ARCHIBALD

Brendan McNeal

Brendan is a senior History major from Boulder, CO

Sit out on any fine summer evening, see the earth glow golden, feel the cool breeze slip through the leaves and gently kiss your face before it moves on; it's beautiful. Many an evening I've sat up on my fine rocking chair, pulling from a pipe, eyes closed with a cool glass of iced tea at my side. That is the life. That is why God made this good green earth, and my, isn't it a pleasant earth when things is that way.

But I, like many a person I know, am struck by some of things that God also decided to place on this earth apart from gorgeous summer evenings, cool breezes, tobacco and iced tea. I'm sure y'all have felt the same way at some time in your life. I'm certain y'all have looked at some critter or plant and wondered, *now why in the name of heaven is THAT here? What are its purposes to my well being or the well being of anything else?* They're head-scratchers that's for sure. I've tried to rationalize up, down and sideways to figure it all out, but it normally don't come to nothing.

Well like I said, I sits out of doors most summer nights—except when it's storming—and I have never beheld such a fine plate of scenery in my entire life, but I've had to struggle for that plate of scenery mind you. My beautiful, fine summer evenings weren't always so fine and beautiful, no sir. Now you recall me talking about critters that just don't play no purpose on this earth, well mine that gives me the greatest trouble is squirrels. Have you ever thought about it? What on earth do they do besides eat your birdseed and attack your dogs and children and pillage your garden? Not much except chatter away at you anytime you go into

## THE WAR WITH MR. ARCHIBALD

your own yard, like you're invading they're personal space or something.

Now I've made it sort of my life goal to eradicate squirrels from my living space, and for the most part I've been successful. I say "for the most part" because there once was this nasty little chubber of a squirrel I named Mr. Archibald, because I always thinks it's proper to name my adversaries, who just near ruined my peace of mind for an entire summer.

I reckon he moved in about mid-April or somelike except I didn't come to noticing him until May, give or take. First time I laid eyes on him I said to myself, "Zachary, you have yourself a mighty troublesome squirrel and it's a going to be a chore to get him rid of this yard." Just the sight of him said trouble: big, fat, grey thing with an underbelly like a tub of margarine, and big black eyes that would make a soul believe he was ready for the darndest skullduggery a squirrel could manage.

I had a general idea of squirrel eradication and so I figured a fine bit of scaring would chase that barbarian straight off; so I sent my two beagles Gilligan and Gunther after him one afternoon and they went a hounding and wagging away having a grand old time of it. Pretty soon that general dog happiness turned into some mighty painful yelps and I peaked outside just in time to see that Mr. Archibald firmly attached to Gilligan's ear. I figure Archibald had a good chuckle out of his monkeyshines but poor Gilligan was afraid of setting foot out of doors for the next week or so.

While I was figuring another plan to deal with Archibald, he had a grand old time of thieving and flat ruining my garden, harassing my dogs and scaring away all the birds, such a good time that he invited seven more of

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his friends along to join the conniving. They did many horrors to my fine yard and grated so on my piece of mind that a moment couldn't hardly pass when I wasn't thinking about some sort of scheme to put an end to all their mischief. Near made me come unhinged, my wife told me.

You may reckon my wife thought I'd walked myself straight off the reservation, so to speak, with my squirrel obsession. Told me that she'd a found another husband had she known hers was going to spend his seventies at war with a few measly, harmless rodents. I tried to reason with her left and right, told her it weren't just for my good, but for the good of all that cared to live out of doors, but she'd just scold me worse than before.

I was sure I was right and lo and behold! One day them squirrels proved my worst suspicions was true by climbing—all eight of them mind you—through our kitchen window while my wife was making her rhubarb pie. I was out with Gilligan and Gunther, but the scream she let out could a replaced a tornado siren because Lord knows you'd likely heard it from ten mile away. I ran myself back to the house in time to see her all raggedy and roughshod with that rhubarb pie in a most terrible, tattered state. By her account, she'd gone to fetch herself a slice of that pie only to see three squirrels pop their heads out "mouths full of gluttony," or some sort of Bible saying. You can imagine *that* gave her a right scare and she hurried to the refrigerator to lob some apples or somelike at them only to find four *more* of them that'd already beat her to it. I'll reckon she was more startled than scared, but she'd shooed them all out and promised that no more would ever set foot across any window frame, door frame, picture frame or any other kind of frame, which was fine by me.

I has to say I was a bit concerned because I

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done the figuring in my head and it sounded like she'd only caught eye of seven squirrels and I was mighty sure Archibald weren't no kind of squirrel to sit a gig out or let none of his band sit out neither. But my wife told me I was just paranoid so I didn't give much more thought to it until that evening. And that evening I'll say I thought a mighty good bit about it seeing's how I found Archibald hisself behind my T.V. chewing straight through the wires. Somehow that devil came to escaping from my hands, my dogs' mouths, my wife's broom, the knives, pillows and most anything else we could find in our house. How he got back out of doors is still beyond my imagination, but I tell you that little expedition into my house really got my thinking gears working and I spent a good deal of time over the next few days considering ways to rid myself of them nasty varmints once and for all.

By and by I came up with a fine battle plan, as I liked to call it at least, to happily purge my yard of them pillaging rodents. The way I saw it, I could go to the hardware store, fix me up some of them squirrel traps, load them up with peanut butter (my granddaughter told me they most especially likes that) and lay in wait to see if I caught any. The man at the hardware store told me it was bulletproof, but the traps weren't because I shot one of them to see, so I figured he meant the plan and that made me pretty confident. That afternoon, I set them traps out all nice and pretty as to be the most enticing things a squirrel could ever want to see and went to bed that night thinking I'd have old, fat Archibald and the rest of his gang in cages by the next evening.

The scheming worked, partially at least, because the next day I had me two of his companions but not Archibald hisself. He was too clever, I reckoned. Them two

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were disposed of and I laid in wait for another week so's to see if I could catch more but it weren't no use. I figured Archibald had gone and told the others to keep clear so they went back to their old mischief of chasing my dogs, eating my tomatoes, and chattering away at me every time I went outside.

My traps wasn't quite the deterrent I'd been hoping they'd be. See, I figured killing off a few, or most of them, would scare the general squirrel population so they wouldn't be so ornery in the future. That didn't happen; and it seems my killing a couple of their kinfolk got Archibald and the others mighty upset because their "old mischief" seemed a sight more bothersome than it was before and I smelled revenge in everything they done. But there weren't no evidence to my smells, so there wasn't much to be done other than think me up another plan to get rid of the lot of them. Mind you, I was fairly uneasy thinking of what they'd do next and I had a right to, seeing's how they near dismantled my old pickup truck a few days later.

I know it sounds like one of them fishing stories, but they done it and I'm darned certain they done it. How else can you explain all them wires being chewed straight through with all the bits and pieces of acorns left behind in the engine? I tell you it was Archibald, and I'll bet you the state of Kentucky that he knew exactly what he and his gang was up to the entire time. You can right believe that truck weren't fit for driving, wouldn't even start. And dear sweet potatoes, don't even get me to talking about the way they clawed and chewed at the inside part; I'd never seen the likes of it before or since.

These little tribulations made me the laughingstock of town and it got a sight worse when my truck had to be towed in with everyone and their dog watching. My friends

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was all just fit to be tied thinking about old Zachary getting outsmarted by a gang of lawn devils, and they couldn't hardly let a moment pass without letting off some wisecrack. Told me them squirrels was smart enough to do my taxes if I'd ever pay them for it. All this monkey-making got my thinking wheels moving again and I'd barely let a day pass without some sort of trip to the hardware store, which was always where I came to thinking up the most cunning schemes.

Soon enough I came up with a new plan to poison some nuts and lay them out pretty normal-like so's that band of miscreants could have at them. In just a few days I'd killed three more of them, except Gunther took to eating a whole stack full hisself and near died because of it. I couldn't a been more pleased though, and them ideas was popping up like prairie dogs so's I had near three dozen new ones by the next week.

I took the most bulletproof of them plans—imaginatively, mind you—and went about setting up a big old bird feeder plum full of the most delicious squirrel-type treats a body could imagine and camped out on the roof with my 22 rifle. By that way I killed off two more of the gang so's by early June it was just Mr. Archibald left to fend for hisself.

Turns out "by hisself" weren't such a bad thing for Archibald because things headed straight south after the rest of his gang was put away. My wife told me he had a vendetta or somelike, which right concerned me I'll tell you because it sounded mighty dangerous; but I never saw him with one so I figured he must've kept it nice and safe. But he did get pretty nasty.

One day my granddaughter came over (the cute thing who recommended me the peanut butter). My, she

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was, she is the sweetest thing you could ever meet, wouldn't hurt a fly, even the most bothersome ones. Well she was pretty taken with Archibald, thought he was just cute as a button and wanted to befriend him like all them fairy princesses does. So she went on out into the yard to sing him princess songs and feed him princess treats. I was going to warn her that Archibald was a dangerous little brigand, but my wife claimed she'd beat my head in with a frying pan if I said a word.

Like I said, out my granddaughter went with a few carrots (because squirrels like them too) trying to befriend that grey lump of mischief. Mind you, I was mighty keen on watching the whole thing, but Gilligan and Gunther was, by that time, downright terrified of Archibald and wanted to go inside. Well darned it all, somewhere in that little speck of time when I had my back turned, that furry little scalawag attacked the girl too. She screamed and hollered and wailed while Archibald climbed all over her and ended up on the top of her head, sort a like one of them Indian headdresses.

He took to the trees when he saw me coming on at a thousand miles an hour and was well out of sight by the time my gun was loaded. My granddaughter was a bit shocked. I reckon she'd wanted to be friendly with Archibald but not *that* friendly. I carried her inside still hooting and howling away and promising she'd never play fairy princess again as long as she lived—she did after a couple weeks as it turns out. Anyway, her parents wasn't too pleased, told me that squirrel could a had rabies and God-knew what other disease. I told them rabies and diseases and the like was the least of my worries with old Archibald but my wife chased me from the house with a broom before I could say any more.

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The real nice thing that came from this wild-critter attack was that everybody—except my wife—believed Archibald just had to go. Soon enough, I had the whole family over (four kids and more grandchildren than I can count) all having a go at that hell-raiser. There was enough explosives, guns and ammunition in my house as to provide for the U.S. Marines had they wanted to go squirrel hunting, I reckon. When Fourth of July came around and the family was all out at our place, we launched bottled rockets, roman candlesticks, smoking bombs and all manner of wizz-bangs to terrorize Archibald. True enough, he didn't show for the next week, but he weren't gone and he just kept sinking back into his old habits like nothing had never happened at all.

Darned if he weren't the cleverest, most knowledgeable squirrel ever to walk this earth. He'd still have after my dogs whenever they came near and would clamber up a tree before I could come out and take a good shot at him. Whenever I was out trying to grill or just relax with my pipe I could always hear him guffawing away at me from some yonder tree branch because he knew I couldn't get to him anyways.

I tried darn near everything I could set my mind to, to send Archibald to his maker; the most subtlest squirrel traps a body could find, flaming infernos—which was my grill—that he might fall into, false tree branches with ropes attached so I could make him fall off his high perches. I lost count of the different plans I devised to kill that squirrel, and not one of them worked.

This all went on for the next two months, in the heat of the summer and all. He'd just continue to commit his devilry and I'd run myself ragged trying to catch him at it. By middle August, my wife was right concerned about my mental



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well-being, said I wasn't enjoying myself and was getting mighty obsessed over some little creature such as that. But Mr. Archibald weren't no little creature, he'd gotten big and plump off the food all his dead-and-gone gang'd left behind and I think he was mighty pleased with hisself. He got to be so chattery that I begun to leave a whole bunch of rocks on my porch to hurl at him just so he would shut his mouth every once in awhile. I bet he considered hisself the craftiest squirrel in the world and didn't think nothing could ever happen to him, no way, no how.

Well something finally *did* happen to him, and it happened one morning in later August just when I'd about given up hope of ridding my world of that wretched critter, when I went out to fetch me the paper. Well, I'd taken about two steps out that front door before I heard Archibald chattering and guffawing away at me from a branch of a big, old oak tree about twenty yard from where I stood. I looked down and saw I had a fine throwing rock so I figured I'd give it a shot and heaved that stone harder than Sandy Koufax and Nolan Ryan put together. And you wouldn't believe it, but that rock hit him square between the eyes and he dropped to the ground, dead as Goliath. I let out one of the most lunatic war whoops as ever been heard so's to make my wife come tearing out of the house afraid that I was being murdered or somelike. When she found out it was just on account of Mr. Archibald's kicking the bucket, she turned back inside a muttering, "You and that squirrel Zachary, you and that squirrel."

Well I'm right pleased to say that I haven't never had another squirrel enter my yard these four years past. I reckon Archibald dying did their nerve in for good. My summers has been wonderful peaceful and I can sit out, feel that cool breeze, let my dogs play and sip on some

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iced tea to my heart's content with no worrying about them horrible critters no more. As for Archibald, I took to burying him under his favorite tomato plants to pay my respects, him being such a fine adversary and all. He's still there I figure, and it oftentimes tickles me to think about all the mischief he done to me that summer. Though don't get me all backwards and whatnot, I'm mighty glad he's gone and I hope to heaven I don't never encounter no more squirrels like Mr. Archibald again. I've had enough of them for one lifetime.

The End



# ELECTRIFYING #2

Christina Catterson

Christina is a junior Interior Design  
major from Oceanside, CA





# WE WROTE "JESSE+JAMES"

Thippaghong Chanthavong  
Thippaghong is a junior Writing major  
from Fort Worth, TX

In the middle of March, you told me to have some trust  
'n meet you by the creek so we can sleep by the oak  
whenever the dirt road dries 'n the junked cars rust.

Remember last August when my ma smacked me 'cause I cussed  
in church, but we knew that it was you who told that dirty joke?  
You said sorry 'n told me to have some trust.

'N November, you'd get the apples 'n I'd make the crust  
for the pie, but then suddenly you forgot that the car broke  
'Cause of the dirt on the axel dried 'n the piston had rust.

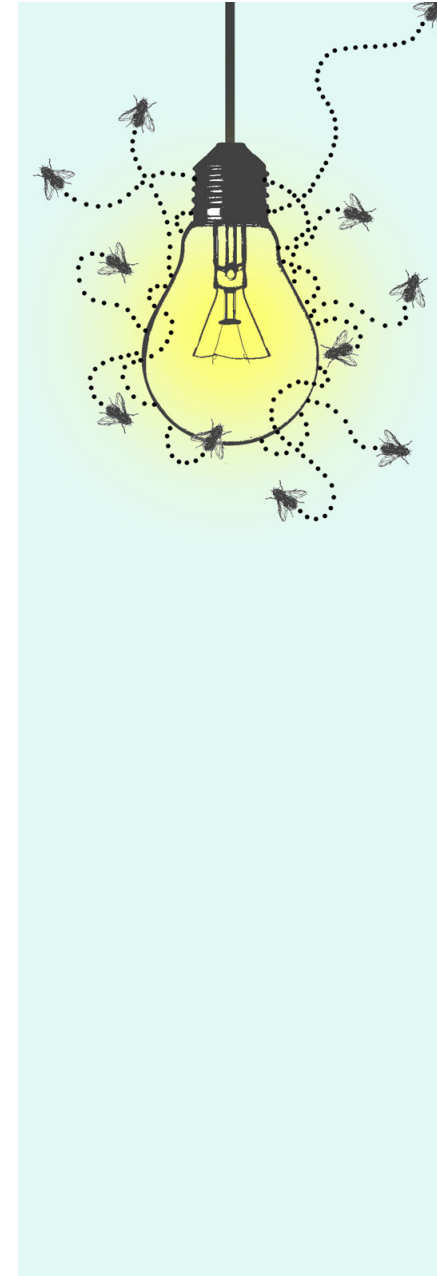
I had hesitation, but you told me what you had ain't lust,  
as I believed you through every word 'n every stroke.  
At the end of December, I thought there was trust.

By February, I don't see you around anymore. I just  
thought you were busy. The times that we only spoke  
was whenever you come around to clean cars of rust.

In the oak tree, I wrote my name, Jesse, as I gathered dust.  
Waiting for you, I felt this lump in my throat choke  
me. At the end of March, I didn't know what was trust  
as I watched the dirt road dry 'n the junked cars rust.

# THE MAIN ATTRACTION

Zach Steen  
Zach is a senior FTDM major  
from Columbus, OH



# SIMON SAYS

Allana Wooley

Allana is a sophomore Anthropology and Writing major from Marble Falls, TX

"SIMON!"

I turned to the teacher-ma'am. She didn't look very happy at all. I don't know what for—she's the one who interrupted me talking to Jack about how dinosaurs, "actually used to fly spaceships, and now they live on Mars and that's where all the craters came from and—"

"SIMON!"

Well there she goes again. "What?!" I'm what mom calls zasprated now.

"Pay attention or I'm going to have to give you a frowny face for the day. We are going to have fun, I promise!" This teacher-ma'am is a lot younger than last year's. She still remembers being a kid so I always give her a chance. Plus dad said, "One more frown, paddle's coming down." I sit up straight like Good Lisa at the front.

"I'm teaching you guys a BRAND.NEW.GAME!!!!!"

I don't know why she yells it at us or pauses so much when she talks but the whole class cheers so I cheer too—that makes her start again. "It's called Simon Says. If I say 'Simon Says' you do whatever follows. If I do NOT say 'Simon Says' you stay frozen. If you move and you are not supposed to, you are out and you will have to sit down until the next game. The last one standing up wins!"

"Simon Says! My name is Simon! What I say!" I holler real loud so teacher-ma'am can hear me 'cause I'm real excited.

"Yes, like your name, but that's just the name of the game. Everybody will actually be doing what I say Simon Says to do."

I don't know how teacher-ma'am is gonna know

\_ SIMON SAYS \_

what I say to do unless I tell her, but I'm still real excited. I like this game already—it's mine! She tells us to touch our shoes, which I don't fall for—I didn't say to do that!

But then teacher-ma'am says, "Simon says be a monkey!"

I don't do it, 'cause I didn't say that neither. Everybody else is jumping up and down and eee-eeeing, but I didn't tell them to. That means I won! I start getting real excited. I think I accidentally hit Joe and Bad Lisa with my arms while I'm celebrating, but that's okay 'cause I'm Simon and I can just tell them to not tell and they'll have to do what I say because that's the game.

"Simon, sit down, you're out."

"No, I'm not!"

"Yes you are. You did not do what Simon Says—he said to be a monkey." She looks like how my mom did yesterday when I started asking her about what's inside a snow globe. She told me it was chemical water but I knew that was wrong, so I told her it was probably a jellyfish fossil. My mom smiled but her face stayed all scrunched down on top. Teacher-ma'am's scrunched face is looking at my chair real hard.

"But you said Simon says be a monkey and I never said that!" Sometimes I don't like teacher-ma'am.

"Simon is just the name of the game—it doesn't have anything to do with you. Now be a good sport and sit down."

"Fine!" Sometimes I hate teacher-ma'am.

I plop down hard. My bottom stings but I wanted her to hear my mad. I sit for a long long long time while everybody around me keeps doing things the teacher says I'm saying.

I tug on Jack's shirt while he's wiggling his ears.



**\_ SIMON SAYS \_**

"Stop! You aren't playing it right! I didn't tell you to do any of that!"

But teacher-ma'am hears me and tells me to sit back down before she gives me a frowny face again. I'm mad at Jack. I'm not gonna sit by him at lunch now.

I get madder and madder. Teacher-ma'am is a liar! The game is about what I say. It's called Simon says. It's not fair! I want to tattletale on teacher-ma'am but I have nobody to tattletale to, so she gets to get away with it. And she is making everybody do the most dumb things! Like spin around and clap their hands and sing real loud. I would have people do way cooler things than that.

Good Lisa wins the game, which makes me angrier, cause I should have won. I close my eyes and squinch them up real hard cause I'm not gonna do anything until teacher-ma'am says sorry and lets us play the right way. But when I open my eyes to take a tiny peek I see everybody lining up for recess, and I don't want to miss that, so I decide to be mad after the playground.

When we get to the playground everybody starts splitting up and running to the swings or monkey bars, and they won't listen to me when I yell to stop. Then I remember my game teacher-ma'am messed up and yell, "Simon Says stop!"

Everybody stops! YESYESYES, this is how the game is supposed to go!

"Simon says stand in front of me." They all come running back and wait in front of me, waiting for my next command. "Simon says . . . umm . . . I say to pat your belly." Everybody laughs and starts patting their belly.

I'm getting real excited now! I jump up and down as I say the next one. "Stomp your feet! Stomp your feet!" Most people stomp their feet, but a few just keep patting their

**\_ SIMON SAYS \_**

tummies. They don't listen very well.

"You and you and you and you and you—you're out!" I point at all the people messing up.

Good Lisa gets real mad. "You didn't say Simon Says stomp your feet! You have to say Simon Says! That's what Ms. Tergle told us!" She puts her hands on her hips and stomps one foot. Too late, I think—that stomp won't count for anything anymore, she's still out.

"Teacher-ma'am has to say Simon Says cause she isn't Simon. I'm Simon, so you have to do everything I say." I don't know why I have to tell her this. Since I am Simon, I just have to say what I want people to do. Good Lisa is still mad and tries to be mean back, but everybody else starts nodding and oh-ing cause they get it now.

I stand on the swing seat so that I can see everybody better. And also so that I can sway—I like to sway. They all look up at me just waiting for what I say next. I like this game a lot! I tell them "Spin around real fast." They look funny getting dizzy and falling over, but they just keep spinning cause I didn't say "Stop."

While everybody is falling down and giggling I think about all the things I can do now! I am Simon! King of the World! Master of everybody! The Big Boss!

"Fly like a bird!"

I could tell people what to do forever! I'll just live in a castle and they will have to bring me games and candy and I'll never have to do any chores or eat any broccoli ever again. You can't tell the teller what to do. I'm Simon and I'm the teller, so I'm the boss of everybody!

"Moo like a cow!"

I don't even ever have to walk again—I can just tell everybody to carry me everywhere! And they have to do it cause I am Simon!

**\_ SIMON SAYS \_**

"Do jumping Jacks!" I say that one for Jack, cause he's my friend again now that he is doing what I want. He likes jumps the best since they are named after him.

"Stop, drop, and roll!" That one is really for fire, but it is tons of fun to do.

I'm having so much fun, and everybody else is laughing and smiling too. I'm the best Simon that ever lived! One day I'm gonna be president so everybody can watch me and do the things I say.

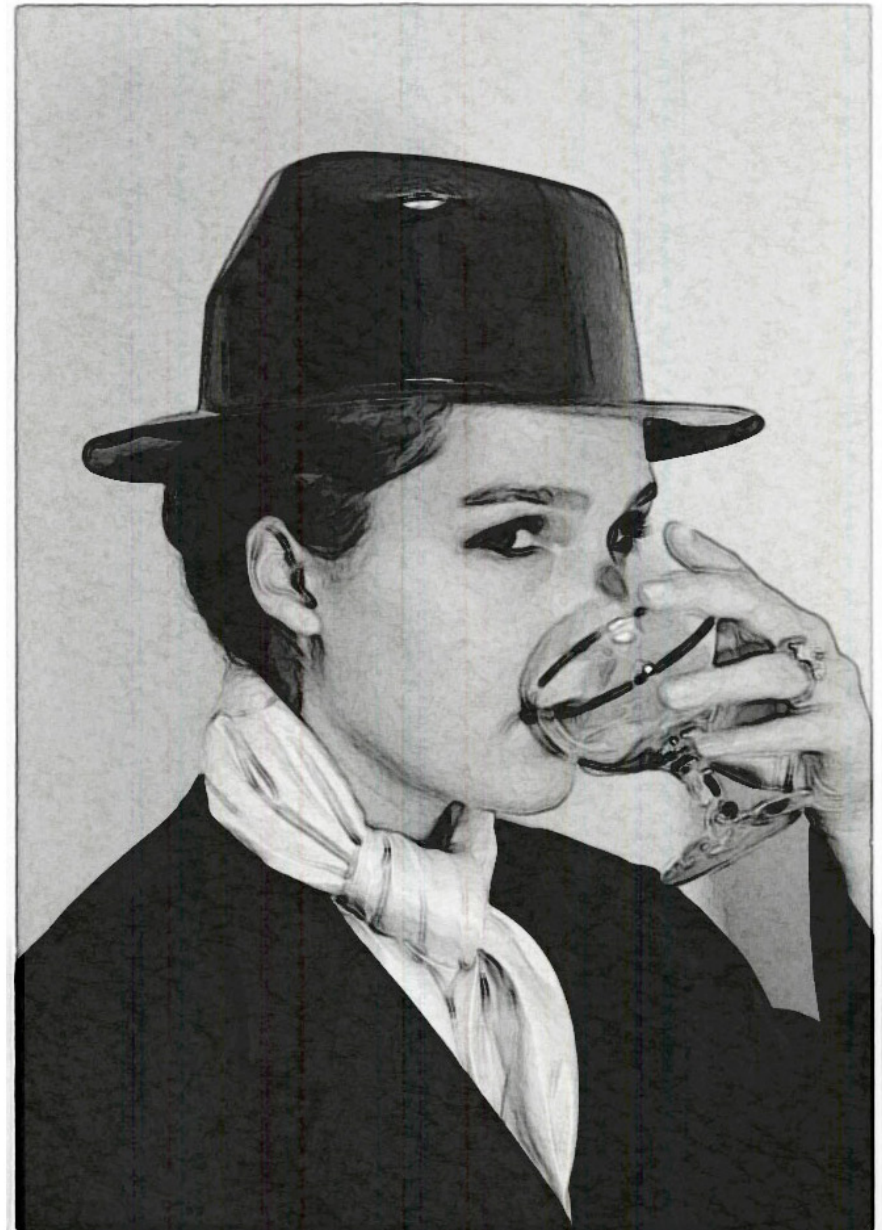
I'm about to tell everybody to clap their hands when teacher-ma'am blows her whistle. That means it is time to go back inside. She also tells me to get off the swing since it's dangerous. I jump down and run after everybody, happy that I'm never ever ever gonna have to do anything anybody tells me to do ever again.

Cause I'm Simon and that's what I say.

# LADY ESQUE

**Amy Dondalski**

Amy is a freshman Economics and Sociology major from Lake Forest, IL



# TWO CENTS

Rachel Causey

Rachel is a junior English major from  
Monroe, LA

Don't worry, I know—

The straight grey road stretching out,  
the clear day before you,  
the twangs of a banjo celebrating  
from your speakers. You feel light  
except for the smallest bit of leftover  
brain in your stomach and the  
decision stinging in your throat.

So your heart is on the accelerator  
for the moment, head thrashing  
in the trunk. But that won't last  
long, since this morning your friend  
dropped her two cents in your hat—  
a flimsy old thing that never  
makes any sense on its own.

*You think so?* Though it was only  
spare change, and though you can't  
spare a change, you do because  
you tell yourself her two cents  
are important. Those copper  
and zinc circles worked for her,  
and so they should for you.

You take the money and with  
wincing eyes open the trunk  
you tried hard to keep closed.  
Your brain hits the brakes, blinkers, turns,  
and the thumping in your chest dies  
away. With fear at ten and fact at two,

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

\_ TWO CENTS \_

you drive slow enough to hear  
the crickets whispering.

A hundred decisions down the road,  
you're tired, and your tire—someone  
offers to change it. Where is the  
spare? Can you spare the change?  
You can, and you will. You will  
follow that grey road a thousand  
different directions, opening and  
closing that trunk  
a million different times,  
but it'll get you there.  
Or here at least.

# BEER MAN, AUSTIN

Ethan Wang

Ethan is a senior Photography major  
from Chengdu, China





# PRESENCE

Cassandra Castillo

Cassandra is a junior Creative Writing and Spanish major from Chicago, IL

Night on night I laid, stacked,  
anxious like Jenga sticks—  
But slept.

Tonight writes  
the twist in the midst—Glory.  
Shoulders rest, fire beneath  
my chest: learning Your burning.

You're burning, my smile brimming.  
Beneath bone flames moan:  
eyes drier, deeper with time.  
Day's right bookend erased  
Topples me into bright life.

Love's overflow still slicing  
into night; Presence purrs  
and pierces, hissing joyous  
songs, like kerosene.

# THE BEST STANZA

Cassandra Castillo

Cassandra is a junior Creative Writing and Spanish major from Chicago, IL

The best stanza  
written, walked.  
Talked. Poked  
minds, tugged  
and healed hearts.

The best stanza written broke every rule. While fulfilling them all.  
Offending endless readers. while loving them all. This stanza  
breathed and bled a brave Love. It was hard-pressed  
against the greatest  
resistance: wrath.  
Slaughtered  
by screaming  
dyslectics. The best  
stanza stood and  
said everything  
by saying nothing  
at all. Now my  
writer's block is  
as light as that  
two ton stone  
solely because the  
best stanza written  
still lives.

*I recall once on the church steps,  
When I moved to kiss your chest  
How we paid such close attention  
To each sweet and stuttered breath\**

The curtains fall like voices on deaf ears.  
Leading April to cruelty, revolving like  
Vacant women in lots, promoting the  
Empty bags of bachelorhood, silent and  
Stoic and costing far too much because of  
This goddamned college town we live in,  
Where everything's marked up, including  
Your dignity, your life, your innocence.  
Buy it back, it's a bargain fit for Faust.  
Extra, extra, childhood is waving goodbye  
On a red bicycle you used once and then  
Tossed aside.  
Step right up, listen to the songs that  
Last burned your ears in the shadow  
Of an orange-yellow high school  
Band bus, laughing with the ghosts and  
Not caring about rent, or grades, or  
The politics of existence.

*I should have stopped to paint our picture,  
Captured honest pure affection,  
Just to document the difference  
Between attraction and connection*

(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)

I can't lie to you; the thoughts limply droop  
From my hair like wilted daisies in a  
Failed fairy ring. You still occupy the  
Back walls of my mind, a Polaroid  
I haven't shaken and have only tacked up  
To know that it once was real.

*And I can see all of my friends and I  
Break into empty buildings  
When the coast was clear,  
With backpacks full of beer*

I can't extricate myself from adulthood,  
As much as I'd like to try.  
I want so badly to feel that  
Moment-living teenaged feeling again, to  
Know that the world is hurtful but,  
Dammit, it's my world, to do with  
What I wish. I could open my arms  
And swallow the sun. I could know  
That I was crystallizing into who  
I would eventually become. I could  
Kiss someone and let the moment last  
As long as eternity, as endless as possibility.

*We'd throw our bottles from the rooftops  
At the city; it looked endless.  
Guess I still don't see the difference  
Between real purpose and that urgent adolescence*

I can only hope one day,  
Some better you, some

(poem continued on next page, stanza break)

*\_ UNTITLED \_*

More complete me, could  
Pour into my being,  
Make me believe in life,  
Convince me that time  
Can run backwards,  
Call me Merlin and  
Get me to respond.

I wait for the snow,  
Like gently wafting December,  
To begin its reunion with sky.

*\*Italicized stanzas are lyrics from La Dispute's "Nine"*

# THE 5TH ELEMENT

Charlie Gober

Charlie is a sophomore Environmental  
Science major from Atlanta, GA

My nature is..  
Strong, sturdy, solid,  
Unmoving rock.  
Life takes root in me. I support every person,  
Every nation. I am earth.

My nature is..  
Gentle, gliding, gusts,  
Dancing breezes.  
Invisible observer, I whisper through  
The world. I am wind.

My nature is..  
Burning, bright, brilliant,  
Powerful flames.  
From my ash, life is reborn.  
I comfort the cold with my heat. I am fire.

My nature is..  
Cooling, calming, crashing,  
Flowing waves.  
Forming infinite designs with clouds in the sky.  
I am nature's artist. I am water.

My nature is..  
Strong, gentle, burning, cooling,  
Blended emotions.  
Equally called to both hate and love.  
My legacy is my own to create.  
I am man.

# A NIGHT IN LATE DECEMBER

Eliezer Flores

Eliezer is a junior Communication  
Studies major from Washington, D.C.

It was on a night in late December,  
her beautiful face I can still remember,  
her soft rosy cheeks and large hazel eyes filled  
with tears as I heard her story, and until  
I understood her dilemma, I was unsure  
of what her illness was and what cure  
to give her. I stood, silent, contemplating  
the solution; her solution caused by fading  
hope and a desire to end her misery. One  
by one the others, knowing her history, began  
to discourage her and again and again she fled,  
seeking the one who could shed away her red  
eyes, dry from over spilling, for the well can tire  
from giving. Sooner or later the desire to get from  
the fountain of life can cause a fire of despair among  
those who search for its satisfaction, to no avail. It is unfair  
for me to be among the many who rejected her words,  
merely taking them as lightly as the feathers of common birds.  
I understood her, and knew that her illness was rooted deeper  
than the skin. Emotions and feelings could keep her from  
thinking straight. Her love for Romeo blinded her and the thought  
of never having the one her family rejected and fought  
when she brought his name up at the dinner table. Such  
feud, capable of becoming a fable, threatened her sanity.  
Life is short, and the youth take advantage and strive for vanity.  
This poor thing was willing to anything to do anything to override  
her family.  
I gave her the solution; I could not take it anymore.

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

## - A NIGHT IN LATE DECEMBER -

I proposed it as temporary and she was warned before  
but her poor heart listened to nothing else, but the voice  
of her love pronouncing her name, in her eyes it was not  
vain.

He was pure to her, sacred as a dove.

She took the medicine her illness required, ignoring the side  
effect

of fate and destiny, and I admire how one tragedy has  
allowed

for us to come to accept that perhaps it was meant to be.

Romeo and Juliet, I bury thee, and you, young Prince,  
forgive me.

I understand my actions have caused the death of two  
young lovers;

However, my actions have brought two feuding families  
together

in unison, for grief and tragedy unites us and blind hatred  
divides us. But one thing is certain, for death, we are all  
fated.



# WHAT THE DESERT LACKS

Megan Osborne

Megan is a sophomore Psychology  
major from Coppell, TX

In London the scent of rain lingers  
No sunshine only the clouds and fog.  
Like soldiers on guard, pools of rain stand  
As children jump from puddle to puddle.  
Driving down the Interstate  
Raindrops race across glass, who will win?  
Mother always said, "To avoid catching colds,  
One must always wear a raincoat."  
Students get excited when the skies start to darken  
They put rain boots on their feet like lacquer on wood  
Failing to notice the clouds weighted down  
As giants dance atop.  
Rain fends off drought to keep bellies full  
And mothers shout praises to the skies  
That their children will survive another day.  
Cue the rain, the actors embrace tenderly  
Fulfilling every adolescent girl's romantic longings.  
Rain blurs my vision like smoke clouds clear skies  
Walking down the endless city streets.  
Soccer practice is rained out kid cries  
The mother consoles by turning on Nickelodeon.  
It begins to rain, smell of wet dog lingers  
Like the stench of the New York City subways.  
At recess, the playground is overrun  
By children dancing in rain like cattails in wind.  
People sleep in bed with dreams flitting in their brain  
They long for tomorrow's rain to wash away stains of mistakes.  
I stand at the edge of Victoria Falls,  
I cannot escape the rain that roars.

# THE WINDOWED DISPLAY

Megan Osborne

Megan is a sophomore Psychology  
major from Coppell, TX

That mirror shallow shows me  
Images casting a broken girl  
Here within an empty room  
Shall I carry on my private waltz?

Images casting a broken girl  
Among smog moving through cracked windows  
Shall I carry on my private waltz,  
A mannequin whose heart beats beneath the plastic?

Among smog moving through cracked windows  
Comes heaviness only I can touch  
A mannequin whose heart beats beneath the plastic  
I may dance a solo, but I move

Comes heaviness only I can touch  
Here within an empty room  
I may dance a solo, but I move  
That mirror shallow shows me.

# KANGAROO ANTHEM

Riley Knight

Riley is a senior Writing major from  
Beach City, TX

\_ KANGAROO ANTHEM \_

I'm in and out of lying to myself. My train always rolls  
downstream, away from any kind of spring, or fall.  
It's either black or white, hot or cold, left or right.  
Up or down. Red, blue. Not all around. Kangaroos  
should out-weigh elephants. Their agility lacks,  
their minds, abused. Kangaroos nurture their  
young within themselves, sheltered from a  
world where wigs are worn and oaths are  
sworn and Catholics drown the young  
children with water blessed by the holy  
one. Rhythm finds meaning amongst  
the child teething its mothers' hard  
nipple late into the night. What  
would it do without comfort?  
How can it live life without sin  
in this up down world it was  
thrown in. White in the flag  
removed leaves only red  
and blue, reminiscent  
of confused 1862.  
Men lay weeping  
in their rooms.  
All are alone.  
I'm alone.

I weep to  
only myself.  
Nobody knows.  
Me. When I exude  
this force so drearily.  
This replication of Leary  
on a hot summer day in June.  
I am not sure what he wanted, only  
what he created: the voice of a dream  
lived by renegade teens who wander by, lost  
in the rhythm of the rising moon, searching for  
the next time a dream tells them what it is that is true.

*(poem continued on next page, stanza break)*

# NOVEL

Bailey Betik

Bailey is a sophomore English,  
Theatre, and Anthropology major  
from Ennis, TX

i want to check you out.  
not like a creepy pick-up line  
(did you fall from heaven? hey, what's your sign?)  
scan up and down and back again  
and awkwardly make eye contact lift eyebrows walk away type of thing.  
not a shallow conversation, a midnight rendezvous, or a high school date  
or a friend of a friend of a friend.

no, I want you like a library book, to pull you from the cramped shelf and  
blow off the layer of perfumed old-vinyl dust, to swipe my fingers across  
your cover and hear the soft creakings of bindings shifting, of stories  
getting ready to be told

I want to read you, closely, word for word-even though I know that I  
secretly want to devour you in one sitting, never to crack you open again,  
yet proclaim that you are by far my favorite novel, a bestseller read-once  
back on the stacks.

no, I want you closely, analytically, objectively, to chart your plot, your  
exposition, your denouement, your English teacher smiling smugly as I  
sketch your skeleton, your pentameter, your foot. I want you symbolically,  
metaphorically, the flesh of basic instinct, of enigma; I want your  
Eckelberg eyes, your scarlet letters, your Jack Londons and your moors.

I want to examine you, letter by letter, want to learn about the smallest  
details.

If blue's your favorite color, if you like clementines, if you can remember  
the theme song from Arthur. If you've vacationed in the Carolinas, if  
you've ever considered joining the circus, if you watch Breakfast at  
Tiffany's when it rains.

If you drink hot chocolate with marshmallows. If you sat on the  
phonebook as a child.

*(poem continued on next page, no stanza break)*

- NOVEL -

Have you ever read a book that made you think? Played hopscotch?  
Owned a cat?  
Are you a Presbyterian? Do you eat raisins? Are you sad?  
Where are you going? Where have you been?  
Have you been in love? Ever?

I want to lazily flick through your pages, thumb them gently, bury my  
nose deep inside your spine, among your leaves, and breathe the scent  
of your mother's bread, your father's chair, your sister's homecoming  
bouquet, inhale your fresh-cut grass, your lightning bugs, your alphabet  
magnets.

I want to memorize you, to let the words spill off my tongue like pebbles,  
rolling and clicking against the others with certainty when I recite your  
address, your middle name, your favorite kind of cake.

I want to renew you, again and again, to reread your sentences,  
recognize your syntax, to pinpoint your diction among thousands of  
others. I want you for my library, my own personal collection, so I can  
read you any time I like, forever, so I can immortalize your indices, learn  
your glossary, teach your history.

But I do not. I cannot.

The entire world is made of phoenixes, born and reborn.

I can only slide the card cautiously out of the pocket, like so many others  
before, checking the stamp to confirm that my time with you is overdue,  
and fold down the pages I had dog-eared, straightening the creases I  
had left, erasing the pencil marks, the underlines, the quotes,  
putting you back the way I found you before I place you carefully  
back on the shelf for the next one to pick up.

# GESTALT CAT

Peyton Frank

Peyton is a sophomore Art History major  
from Keller, TX





# #3

Abigail is a senior Studio Art major from Arlington, TX



# #6

Abigail is a senior Studio Art major from Arlington, TX





# ILLUSIONMENT #4

Abigail Philip

Abigail is a senior Studio Art major  
from Arlington, TX





# ILLUSIONMENT #5

Abigail Philip

Abigail is a senior Studio Art major  
from Arlington, TX

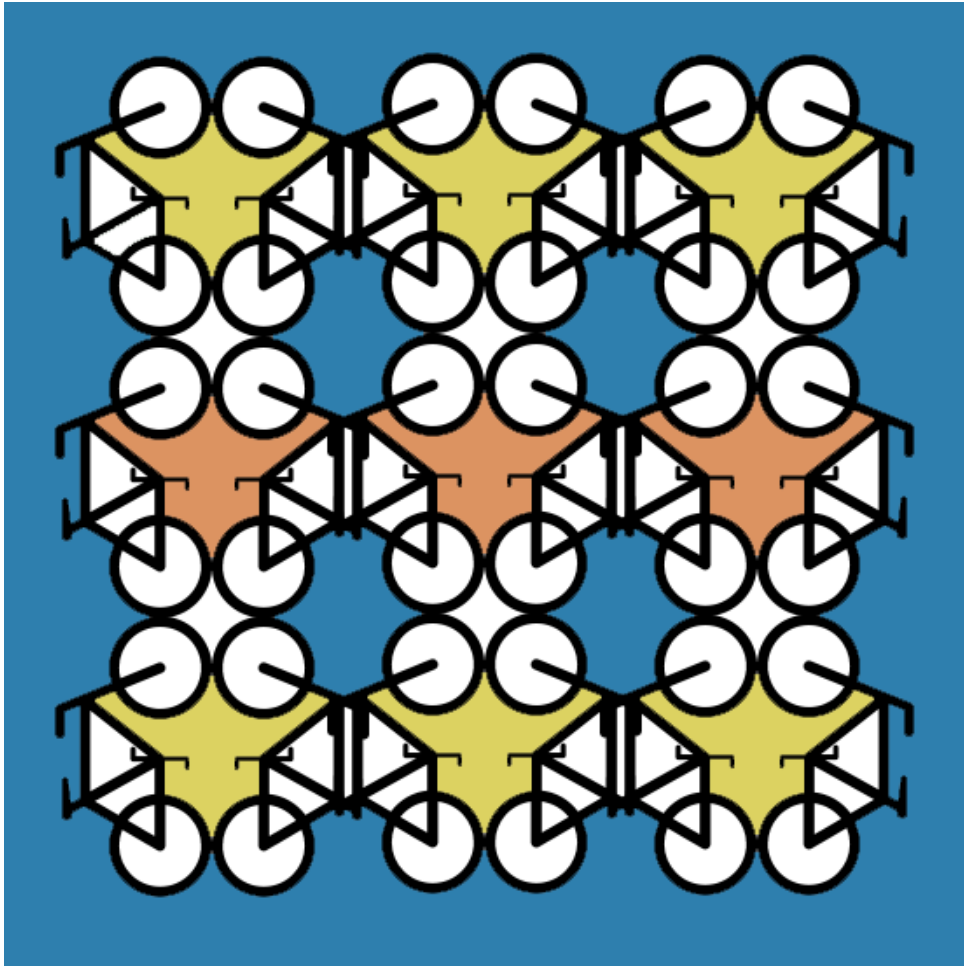




# NO HANDS

Zach Steen

Zach is a senior FTDM major  
from Columbus, OH



# LISA FRANK

Alden Williams

Alden is a junior Studio Art major  
from Fort Worth, TX





# MAN AND HIS BEST FRIEND

Ethan Wang

Ethan is a senior Photography major  
from Chengdu, China





# THE POINT FIVE PROJECT

Shelby Tsuji

Shelby is a sophomore Film major from Rancho Palos Verdes, CA



# DALLAS METROPERPLEXED

Matthew Szal

Matthew is a junior Art History major from Fort Worth, TX





# FT. WORTH

Matthew Szal

Matthew is a junior Art History major  
from Fort Worth, TX





# ELECTRIFYING #1

Christina Catterson

Christina is a junior Interior Design major  
from Oceanside, CA





# ELECTRIFYING #6

Christina Catterson

Christina is a junior Interior Design major from Oceanside, CA



# GOD RESTS HIS SOUL

Ben Taylor

Ben is a senior Religion and Writing double-major from Kennedale, TX

"Sir, I'm going to have to ask you to return to your seat. The seatbelt light is on, and you can't use the restroom right now." The flight attendant delivered this request with precision and perkiness, always hoping to convey kindness in her voice when giving instructions to passengers.

"Oh it's okay, really, I'm..." God stopped mid-identification, ashamed of himself for almost revealing his identity for the sole purpose of relieving himself only twenty minutes into the flight. He cleared his throat and muttered, "Yes ma'am, I apologize." He had made a promise not to let anyone know who he was on this trip. He returned to his seat, placed it in an upright position, decided he did not, in fact, need to use the restroom, and that was that.

God had not taken a vacation since the seventh day of Earth's existence and had recently determined it was high time he took a break from all of the stresses his line of work involved. Projects had become overwhelming lately as they continued to stack up, from keeping his name out of the upcoming election to the leadership summit with the prophets to discuss appropriate avenues for revelation.

More often than not, however, the catalyst for a meltdown is a much smaller, seemingly insignificant incident. A secretary had accidentally filed a prayer for "a win in our tournament next Saturday" under the Needing Further Review prayer folder, and God stumbled upon it in the exact moment he was ready to break. He began throwing curses down upon the secretary and at one point vaguely threatened to take her wings, and stormed back into his office where he slammed the door so hard it shook the gates of hell. Prayers were thrown all over the office, still

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

unanswered and now very disorganized, but they would have to wait for God to be in a better mood. He left them strewn about the clouds, and made a swift and loud exit from the heavens.

Because God had stormed out so quickly, none of the angels had any time to make flight arrangements and Matthew didn't have a chance to budget expenses for the trip. God didn't care. He was fed up, and headed straight for the airport to do things the earthly way. The angry flight from up high gave God only enough time to pack a small carry-on, filled with enough clothing to last a year (just in case) and toiletries, many of which were thrown out when airport security pointed out that they exceeded the liquid-ounce limit. God shrugged it off, and put the toiletries back into his bag when security wasn't looking.

God had dropped himself into Canada on his way out of Heaven, in a large span of woods to be exact, and was only witnessed by one very terrified backpacker. "Whatever," God thought. "No one would believe him." When he arrived at the nearest airport with no ticket in hand, God took the last seat headed out to New York. America was not his first choice for a vacation by any means, but he knew it was the one country he could probably spend time in unrecognized by its people. The last seat available on the flight was, unfortunately, in first-class. Now God knew how this would get blown up if the media ever got wind of it, what with all of his son's talk about the first being last, but God decided to take his chances in comfort rather than stick to his guns next to the bathroom everyone flocks around midway through any flight. He also got an aisle seat, which he preferred, because he had looked down through the clouds long enough. Any other view was better at this point.

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

With his boarding pass in hand, God went through securities, dealing with the illegal liquids nonsense and having a minor hang-up with the metal detector. The security official, only half-attentive to his duties, asked God, "Do you have a watch on, sir?" God laughed at the thought, and, knowing it was his belt that caused the disturbance, removed the unnecessary accessory from his pants and tossed it. The security official became more aware of himself at this point, slightly perturbed at a man throwing his belt out just because it set the metal detector off, but ultimately held back from pursuing to investigate the odd behavior. God appreciated, for once, the apathy of man.

A three-hour delay on the flight to New York went unnoticed by God, who lacked any notion of time. He actually missed his flight three times before boarding a plane, and, despite his ticket being invalid by this point, was passed through regardless with a special note to "keep an eye on the heavysset, squirrely fellow in seat D2." Airports needed all the money they could get these days, and God, for once, was thankful for the economic downturn, even if he did get blamed for it quite often.

So here God was, on a flight from Canada to New York, being asked to sit down in his first class aisle seat, and ready for the relaxation to come. But something was off. God could place his finger on the problem, of course, because he's God. He was afraid. For the first time in his life since humans had made his job more taxing than he ever imagined it being, God was taking his eyes off of them for an indeterminable amount of time so that he could rejuvenate. What if it all went to hell?

God had what he referred to as babysitter's fear, where everything is going swimmingly, but the fear of

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

turning away for two seconds to clean a dish because the child might burn the house down keeps the babysitter's eyes glued to the child with no allowance for blinking or distractions. Moses had experienced this once, but God had not had a chance to speak with him about the matter before leaving Heaven. So now God was left alone with the thought that, while amongst them, the humans could take an even more terrible turn than ever before and really ruin things.

"That's absurd," God thought, brushing his irrational fear off while placing his sleeping mask over his weary eyes. "How much worse could it get, really?"

"What?" the passenger next to God turned to him and asked. God had not noticed the passenger up until this point, clearly a businessman with good taste or too much money, as he donned a two-button pinstripe suit with cufflinks so shiny they reflected even in the dim light of the tiny bulbs next to the air conditioner knobs. Had the passenger...? No. Could it be that he had read God's mind?

"How much worse could what get?" the passenger restated God's question, to ensure that God knew he was addressing him. God pulled his mask up and glanced at the man, not seeing him as one who would receive divine revelations, and quickly realized that he had thought out loud for so long in Heaven that he had forgotten to keep his thoughts internal on the plane.

"Oh," God cleared his throat, and already had a cop-out response ready. "These *Ice Age* movies," he dismissively waved at the in-flight movie on the overhead screen. "Don't you think they should have quit by now?"

"I can't really say I've noticed them," the man replied with the faintest hint of mockery. "I'm a little old for

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

that kind of movie."

God was no pushover, but he was not about to stoop down to this man's level, nor would he get him fired in a huge corporate scandal, much as he was tempted to. Instead, he muttered, "I guess I'm just really observant." God had found himself backing out of many conversations since getting to Earth. It appeared to him that it was harder and harder to relate to these people.

As he pulled his mask back down over his eyes, the seatbelt light dinged and the pilot announced that the plane would be descending momentarily. God had not caught a wink of sleep yet, and now it was too late. He wondered how many years he could spend on earth, in Heaven, anywhere, before realizing he had not rested at all despite his best efforts. As hard as it was getting to shrug these minor annoyances off, God put his tray back into position and the *People* magazine back into the pouch in front of him. The magazine was not an accurate representation of people, he kept telling himself. But this did as much good as a parent telling their kid they were not unintelligent, regardless of the evidence presented by their grades and pretty much everything that left the kid's mouth. He had not even bothered with the *Sky Mall* magazine, knowing it would contain shameful products with miraculous results.

God was beginning to wonder if this trip was all for naught. He had left Heaven because of a miniscule, bothersome mistake, but all he was running into on Earth were millions of them. And speaking of the devil, the plane was beginning to experience turbulence on its descent. The pilot was informing the passengers to remain calm and in their seats, but God could see where this was going. He unlatched his seatbelt and began making his way to the

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

front when the same flight attendant who had not allowed him into the bathroom blocked his path.

"Sir," the middle-aged, nearing-retirement woman said, her voice still sweet but a little shakier. "I am not going to ask you again to return to your seat. This is serious." She was attempting to focus on the instructions, but fear was creeping its way into every word.

"It's okay," God said, a little more careful with his words now. "I just retired from flying planes not a month ago." This was not entirely dishonest. God had flown planes to various parts of Earth before on business trips, just as a way of walking in people's shoes and also because he knew where the best views were. He appreciated the feeling of "roughing it" he got when he flew a plane, but had not had time in a long while for this kind of recreation.

The flight attendant hesitated, but ultimately trusted God. She led him to the cockpit. "Umm. Sir. This man says he's been flying planes for a long time." The pilot turned around, a panicked expression on his young face. He had just been promoted; God had been hearing his prayers about the job for months.

"The s-storms," the pilot stuttered. "I can't—"

"Yeah, I could probably take it from here," God said, not wanting to make the kid feel inadequate but also, obviously, not wanting the plane to crash. Twenty minutes to an hour later, God couldn't tell, the plane safely landed at its proper destination, through a storm that seemed to calm as soon as God took the reins. The entire cockpit was cheering, singing God's praises to the passengers, telling him he would surely be honored as a hero when the whole world learned of his bravery. But God would have none of it. When the doors of the plane opened, he was at customs without his carry-on and a keen eye out for any unwanted

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attention.

The customs officer looked God up and down, noting his heavy breathing as odd. "Passport?" he asked curtly. God checked his pockets, but he was only buying time. He knew he had left his passport back at home.

"Umm, I forgot it," God said, nervously laughing. The officer reached for his phone, but God was already taking off through the airport.

"Hey, get back here!" the officer yelled. "Stop that man!" But God was long gone, and not planning on returning to this airport any time soon. The employees of the airport would search for the hero/criminal for hours, postponing every flight until the next day when it was clear that God was not going to show up anywhere.

The two stories, of God landing the plane and breaking into the country, would reach national headlines, but no one ever connected the man who saved many to the man who was probably out to kill even more. God would do his best to avoid both headlines, since he was, as always, not out for credit or blame, just out to get something done, selfish as it seemed this time. To avoid recognition, he found a hat and sunglasses at a small tourist shop, paid in cash, and set about getting his vacation to be just that. Was that so much to ask? Could not the Creator of everything create a way out for himself? It seemed less likely by the minute.

But God pressed on. He went on the hunt for a hotel. Any old inn would do at this point, honestly. On his way through the grimly-colored streets of New York, he winced each time he heard his name used in vein but did his best to ignore it. "For Christ's sake!" a taxi driver yelled, with a cigarette burning an even deeper shade of yellow on his teeth than the cab. "Don't you know how to walk,



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jackwagon?!" God took all of this name-calling a bit more lightly than the blasphemy, as these were all names he could see himself calling people if it ever came to that.

This was in addition to the rank smell of sweaty humans walking in packs on sizzling pavement in the middle of July, the gum wads that seemed to be drawn magnetically to God's shoes, and, worst of all, what he was trying very hard to ignore when he walked past a newspaper stand. "I'm not going to look," God kept muttering under his breath. "I'm not going to look." And yet his eye kept getting caught by his worst fear, the world falling apart if he ever turned away, coming true:

STOCK MARKET CRASHES, MONEY WORTHLESS

RIOTS CIRCLE GLOBE, ENTIRE POLICE FORCES QUIT TO JOIN

AIRBORNE DISEASES SPREADING RAPIDLY, KILLING MANY

What was happening? Could God really not take a break without everything going terribly wrong? Wasn't it going wrong enough when he was at work? As these questions circled his head, God kept walking, the headlines getting worse as he journeyed along:

MOST ANIMALS FACING EXTINCTION IN NEXT THREE MONTHS

TSUNAMIS HIT 12 MORE COUNTRIES

MORE DEATH THAN EVER APOCALYPSE SUSPECTED SOON

WORLD WAR II TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK, POLLS SAY

It was all happening this fast, or this slow, God didn't know. God could not guess how long he had been walking, if it had been a few minutes or many years, and so could not tell how quickly the world was imploding. He also could not tell where he was anymore. It appeared he had only paced a few blocks, but perhaps he was unknowingly circling the same area. He attempted to look at the faces around him to see if he recognized anyone but, of course, he recognized everyone. God was lost in New York while the

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

world caved in on itself. For the first time in eternity, God didn't know what to do.

All he knew was that it was all spiraling out of control again, just like it did that first time, just like it had always been since forever. And all along, despite anything he did to try to reclaim Earth for Heaven, things got worse. Things were always getting worse. God was blamed when it was human's fault, God was blamed when it was no one's fault. And now God wondered if he should blame himself. Rest or no rest, the world would turn on itself until there was nothing left to turn on. Should he give up? But if the world was going to burn, perhaps God should be among his people, seeing them through to the other side, where apparently he should have stayed. But would it matter if he was way up high in the clouds watching it all burn or here doing the last bit of good possible before it was too late?

When it came down to it, what God really wanted was sleep. He wanted to not have to ask these questions, to not have to fix things or watch them fall apart anymore. He wanted to fall asleep and wake up and it all be over. No more Earth, no more responsibility, no more trying again and again to restore what kept breaking itself. It was like driving an old car that broke down every time he tried to start it. He loved it despite the fact that it no longer resembled a car so much as it resembled an artifact of a time long gone and not coming back. This was the world now: a souvenir, nothing more. Something to store in the garage, to remind God of the good old days. But when were those exactly? Lost in the clutter of the destruction that found its way into everything. God was trying his hardest not to see this desolate place as a mistake, but feared that the Perfect one had indeed allowed imperfection in his design.

If there was ever a time to hang it up eternally,

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

put the cape in the closet and let go, it was now. If God intervened, he'd have to end the world here and now to make everything better. And Heaven wasn't ready. He had discussed the building design more and more with Jesus over the years, but the execution just wasn't there yet. "I've told you an infinite amount of times," Jesus had said, raising his voice over bulldozers and leaning on a shovel. "Heaven isn't ready until they're ready. Its whole design is premised upon them building it right from where they are. I can't negotiate on that."

God knew all of this. He didn't need Jesus to tell him, but he kept an inkling of hope that maybe his son had found yet another way out for people. The world had only gotten worse since Jesus last left, so the thought of putting faith in man to build Heaven where they were seemed more ludicrous every day. They were asking people to build a palace on a garbage heap. Normally, God's optimistic side would win out, arguing that the best treasure is made from trash. But not today. God wanted his vacation, not another disaster, not another reassuring pep talk to himself.

Lost in thought and still unaware of his surroundings, God had stumbled into Time Square where many media outlets were filming segments on the rapidly-multiplying turmoil affecting the world. Times Square had become a center for riots since the seeming End of the World had begun, and many reporters were covering these upheavals. Flashy signs and blinding lights were being pulled down with cranes, fights were erupting every few yards, and TV stations were constantly moving their locations to avoid their broadcasts being destroyed by a city speeding up its collapse.

God was amidst all of this, unbeknownst to himself, when a sign for Wicked came falling within a foot in front

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of him. As the crash drew the attention of onlookers, a homeless man, drunk out of his mind and with a voice like a megaphone, pulled God out of his mind in an instant.

"Hey! Ain't that God right there?" the man bellowed, and God, at hearing his name not being spoken in vein, whipped around to find a crowd of people staring at him. They were all cheering the fall of yet another advertisement for a consumerist world when the homeless man had called all of their attention to the heavy, squirrely-looking fellow wearing a hat and sunglasses.

"Yeah," a woman piped up. "That is God! I'd recognize him anywhere!"

The camera had turned with the city to face God now, who appeared still and calm on the outside, but was turning the gears inside himself for an exit strategy.

"Well?" the reporter, a young woman who had been trying to work her way up at her station, asked hopefully. She immediately recognized that this could be her moment even as the world burned, the miracle she had waited so long for. "Are you God?"

"I, uh..." God was at a loss. All of the pent-up frustration and exhaustion had taken its toll on him, and he had been caught. There was no divine intervention to save him. Not only would he be seen among humans directly, giving people enough excuse to say that God doesn't come in any other form than God himself, but he would be called to answer for the crashing planet he was visiting. He would have to give a straight answer, something he loathed. Hell, he would actually have to have an answer for the millions of questions on everyone's minds. For once in his eternity, he was not sure if he was yet prepared to give those answers. How was God to apologize to his people for them living in hell when he could not give them Heaven just yet?

## \_GOD RESTS HIS SOUL\_

With this conviction in his heart, God knew what he had to do. Every eye in Times Square, and now the world, was on him, waiting for his response. How long they had been waiting was anyone's guess, but no one was flinching until their redeemer or destroyer told them which he was here for, and how long it would take. If God admitted he was on vacation, he knew deep in his soul that no one would ever trust him again, no matter how hard they tried. In this moment, he couldn't exactly blame them.

God had nowhere to turn. With a deep sigh and a growing feeling of reluctance and regret that had been with him since the fall, God created one escape route for himself, which he knew was no escape at all. With the eyes of the burning world burning into him, God shut the power down in New York, putting every light and camera temporarily out of service, and went back to work.

## THE CROSS MAKER

Lucas West

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The blazing midwest heat beat down upon the dry, cracked earth as the farmer and his wife gathered around a small plot of land marked by a few simple stones. The woman clung to her husband as one might cling to a fading memory, with more desperation and fervor. Her large, blue, glistening tears stained his red plaid shirt as sobs racked her body. There was a stoic expression on his face as he held her. Not a word was spoken, but all that needed to be said was communicated in that profound, grief filled silence. This was their son's final resting place, his grave. He now rested in the arms of God.

He had only been dead a few days, a victim of pure chance and circumstance. It was neither his fault, nor his mother's fault. One could blame the father if he was feeling especially malicious for the farm equipment that had ripped their little boy away was under his command. If the father had only been driving the monstrous tractor slightly slower, or if he had made the choice not to work that day at all because it was the Sabbath, or if he had turned on the machine *only a few seconds later*. Yes, one could blame the father, but placing that blame would not bring their little boy back so the matter was never spoken of aloud. Only in the recesses of the mind did those thoughts ever emerge.

The hiss of margarine on the ancient cook top brought the father back from his daydreaming. There was his wife, dutifully preparing their meal as she had done every night. Now there were no songs, no laughter, no joy. Only the sounds of the instruments she wielded as she made the food, and the occasional sigh as a particular object brought to the surface of her mind a memory of her boy.

Her boy... her little man... her son... She had been teaching him to cook although his father protested severely. It had been her thinking that if he wasn't able enough to help in the fields he should learn something of use. He was starting to become quite the little cook. Some nights he even amazed his father at his accomplishments in the kitchen. There was no doubt he would soon surpass his mother in talent. He could take the simplest ingredients, and turn them into a masterpiece, a symphony of taste and sight and smell.

There was a dull thud as she set the glassware down on the table. The hand painted china had been a gift from their wedding. It was nothing spectacular. For the most part it was relatively plain with seemingly random flecks of blue and gold colored wheat and flowers.

Usually they didn't use the good china except for special occasions, but all their other dishes had been broken when they brought their boy inside to try and save him. All the glass and the blood... the tablecloth stained a crimson red... the shards of glass everywhere. It was like a scene from a horror novel, not real life.

All they had tonight for dinner was mashed potatoes and gravy with some burnt toast. She mumbled an apology, and her husband gave her a look of knowing acceptance. It was all right. What was a little burnt toast compared to the eternal tragedy still etched in their minds? She poured a petite helping of white gravy on her mashed potatoes and slowly began to eat them. After one or two bites her appetite had been sated. For the first few days after the accident she hadn't eaten at all. She had looked like a hollow shell and had so concerned her husband he immediately took her to see a physician. Her gaunt appearance had improved, but she still looked excessively frail.

The farmer looked across the table to see his wife only pushing her food around the plate. He used some of his toast to soak up the excess gravy on his plate. The hard crunch of already stale bread mixed with the burnt flavor almost made his eyes water. The gravy did little to stifle those tastes. He silently pushed his chair back from the table and carried his plate to the sink. As he began doing dishes, the water, with its consistent flowing, proved to be somewhat calming. The frying pan he was washing was black like a cauldron from the burnt toast with pieces of bread still clinging to it such as the final leaves of spring cling hopelessly to their mother tree. He pulled out his old, worn pocket knife and used it to flick the bits off the pan. He laid the knife down, still open, in case the pan required its attention again.

She sat there in silence, listening to the rhythmic pulsing of the water from the kitchen. This was how it had always been. She prepared the meal and her husband cleaned up her kitchen. Some nights he would be in there forever cleaning. He was such a perfectionist that he would scrub until every little bit of leftover food was no longer visible. She sighed and took a drink of her lukewarm milk. It quenched her thirst and for now that was all that mattered. She stood up and carried her plate to the sink. As she set it down on the counter her husband handed her a small, clean plate and some aluminum foil. He would eat her leftovers tomorrow. He always did.

With the dishes put away and the leftovers stored in the refrigerator, they both headed toward their bedroom. He went straight through the bedroom and into their bathroom to take a shower. She shuffled along at a heavy pace, eyes on the floor. When she finally reached their room, she raised her eyes to glance at a photograph



taken last spring, a picture of all of them. Her son in the middle of them, with bright shining blue eyes and a crop of yellow-golden hair like wheat... he reminded her so much of her husband, that same excitement in his eyes, the same determination.

She settled herself into a chair in the bedroom and picked up the worn Bible from the stand beside it. She had turned to the Bible often since her son's death for answers. It was her way of coping. The big, black, bound leather felt cool and smooth in her hands. It was a comforting sensation. It took away, for a moment, the strife and discord of this world.

Her husband entered the bedroom and she laid the Bible to rest on the nightstand. He gave her a knowing glance that told her the bathroom was hers for the moment. He watched as she began shuffling into the bathroom. He looked at the Bible and felt instant sorrow wash over him like a wave from the sea engulfs a lone rock. He could feel his wife's sorrow emanating from the book. She was searching so hard for the answers but just couldn't find them. He wouldn't read that book anymore. He was too full of anger and remorse. He would simply work harder, longer, and more meticulously than before. He found comfort in his work and it provided for his family... for his wife.

The farmer turned around and gazed at the picture of his wife and son. His son looked so much like his wife, with her deep pearlescent sapphire eyes and hair like that of the golden sun on a warm summer's day. It had been a happy day, a joyous day. They had just finished harvest and his son was so proud of a little woodworking statue he had carved. The farmer picked up the statue resting near the photo. So smooth and cool to the touch. It was a little cross made from a block of wood he had discovered and given

to his son. His son labored for months on it, making sure every minute detail was perfect. The young boy had gotten his need for perfection from his father. He believed if you are going to take the time to do something, do it right. He had impressed that upon his son. Maybe he had impressed it too much; maybe he had been too harsh sometimes.

The sudden entrance of his wife brought him back to reality. Her presence had startled him and they both watched in horror as their son's precious little cross fell from his hands. It tumbled end over end for what seemed like an eternity before it collided with the dresser and then the floor. The little wooden cross that his son had labored over, that his son had been so proud of, hit a corner of the dresser and then the floor and splintered into pieces. Alarm washed over the face of his wife and his stomach became a pit of sorrow. His mouth was a gape, from surprise and anguish. His wife's mouth was a small, thin line. Her eyes were suddenly filled with sorrow and agony. He turned away, unable to look her in the eyes. He slowly bent down to pick up the fragments of the cross... It was like trying to pick up the fragments of a fading memory. He could retrieve most pieces, maybe all of them, but he might never know. He made a pile on the dresser next to the photo, like a shrine to the memory.

His wife crawled into bed at a pace of someone in great physical pain. He turned off the light and as he felt his way over to the bed in the darkness he heard a gasp escape his wife. A tortured look was drawn on her face as tears ran down her cheeks like a trickling stream. He lay down next to her and drew her close in his arms. He could taste the saltiness of her tears and feel her body shaking. An ocean of emotion had been opened up, and it overwhelmed them both.

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The farmer awoke early the next morning, such that the dew was still fresh on the ground and the birds had yet to begin their song. A trickle of sunlight flowed through the curtains in the kitchen as he prepared a pot of coffee. He glanced at the table where what remained of his son's masterpiece had been placed. He brought it into the kitchen that morning in an attempt to reconstruct it. What he discovered was that his son had carved the cross in a piece of wood tougher than most. So tough in fact that it must have been nearly impossible to carve. Why it had splintered on the corner of the dresser escaped him.

He sat down to try to piece the cross back together. The farmer noticed that the wood had fractured at very delicate and unpredictable angles such that piecing it together would be a very difficult. He set the pieces down carefully that he had been working with and stepped outside to take care of some chores.

By the time he had come back in, his wife was up and making a meal of bacon, eggs, and toast. She had put the pieces of the cross in her apron and it made a small bulge in the pocket. He sat down and poured himself a cup of coffee. After taking a sip he stood up and then proceeded to heat up some water for his wife's tea.

A bird's melodious song broke the quiet stillness of the kitchen. The farmer looked at his wife as the birdsong reminded him of the songs she used to sing, of the joy that used to fill the kitchen. There was so much that they both wanted to say. So much that *needed* to be said... but they just stood in silence.

His wife turned her attention from the eggs to the toast for moment, tentatively flipping it over with care. After peppering the bacon she began to salt and pepper their eggs. When she was satisfied with the amount, she picked

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her spatula up and started turning the eggs over. As she stepped closer to the pan, a tie on the side of her apron caught on a drawer causing her to misstep. She dropped the egg on the stovetop and it landed with a squishy splat. She continued cooking like it hadn't happened and turned the other egg over. As it came to rest in the pan the yolk broke and the yellow goo engulfed the white like snow might envelop the emerald grass. A cry of exasperation and frustration escaped from her mouth. She sat down in a chair and began to cry again.

The farmer stepped away from his coffee and over to the stove. He immediately tended to the bacon and toast as if they were the only part of the meal that had ever existed. He placed them on plates and delivered them to his wife at the table. He brought the jam and butter and proceeded to fix her toast. She took it, with love and affection in her eyes. As she took a bite of the toast, the sweet, stickiness of the jam overwhelmed her senses. Its smell, its taste, and its texture all seemed more sharpened and flawless. He gave her a look of knowing and sat down to eat his toast and bacon.

With their simple meal aside, the farmer began to clean up the kitchen. For the first time his wife stepped in to help him. She hadn't before; simply because they had agreed that she didn't need to, he was happy to do it.

He looked at the bulge in her pocket and then into her beautiful eyes. He was trying to find the words that would make everything better - that would mend the brokenness in the household, in their lives. No words would come; there was nothing that could be said that would do what he wanted. Out of all the words in the entire English language, none would be powerful or profound enough.

He suddenly had an idea that could do what words

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could not. He dropped his dish in the sink and went outside to a tree. With his pocket knife he shaved some resin off of a nearby tree, catching it in his hand. He soon had a fistful and brought it back inside. His wife had finished cleaning and gave him an inquisitive look when she saw the mass in his hands. He ignored it and took a clean pot out of the cabinet. Following a process taught to him by his father, he carefully began making resin glue.

She finally understood what he was doing. As he worked away at the stove she took the pieces of the cross out of her pocket and set them on the table as carefully as one would set a baby in a crib.

With painstaking care they worked all morning. The sun shone in the window and looked directly upon the table where they sat working. Piece by piece, they reconstructed the cross their son had made, while also piecing back together their broken hearts. The beauty of the object of their love and devotion astounded them in the sunlight. Its polished surface reflected the dazzling rays into the kitchen. They held it in their hands like they had held their son. They could feel the love and pride in each notch of the wood. His heart and soul poured out in a single object.

When he sat down to carve the cross, the boy never knew the profound effect it would have. He didn't notice the undercurrents of his household, the strain in his parents' relationship. He didn't notice the irritation in his father's voice, his mother's avoidance of his father. All he wanted was to make them happy. He couldn't plow the fields like daddy and he could never be a strong spouse like his mommy. He was a disappointment.

He was different than the other kids. He couldn't walk right and while mommy and daddy told him it made him special, he could tell they were disappointed. He

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needed them for everything. Without them he was nothing. The little boy never realized that without him, *they* were nothing.

As they walked up to the little boy's grave, he watched them from overhead. He could see the difference in the way they walked. Daddy held mommy's hand and mommy held her head up high. They felt the sunlight dance across their faces and the little boy could see they were restored. His family was whole. As they knelt at his grave and showed him the cross, time seemed to stand still. After a long while daddy began to sing.

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound..."

Mommy joined in soon after and they sat there at the grave of their son, singing Amazing Grace, harmonizing and making a joyous noise so beautiful and moving that all creation stopped to listen. As they sat there on the earth, cross in hand, their family was healed.

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BURNING WELL, POETRY IS  
JUST THE ASH."

Leonard Cohen