

TERRAIN
VOL.III | WEATHERING

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Terrain, Volume III: Weathering

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

We live in a world of interaction, of push and pull. We converse with each other, marvel at nature, and create art. In each of these activities, we are shaped by the things around us, just as we shape them. Conversations bring new ideas to all parties and undeveloped nature wows us in its untouched beauty, leading us to blaze new paths, trails, and roads to show our friends. The art that we create changes our understanding of the world, and the world, in turn, changes the meaning of our art.

With all this changing and being changed, consistency is fleeting. The ground below us weathers and erodes with the rain, deposited elsewhere in constant cyclic movement. The clouds above us gather and darken, then empty and dissipate. Equilibria are nearly impossible to find amidst the constant motion and interaction of the world.

Christians see this permanent transience for the beauty and truth that it reveals. As T.S. Eliot writes in *Ash Wednesday*:

Because I know that time is always time
And place is always and only place
And what is actual is actual only for one time
And only for one place
I rejoice that things are as they are and
I renounce the blessed face
And renounce the voice
Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice

Each point in time is distinct, as is each place. The moment that is actualized in each place, at each time, is shared between the people who are there and God. God is faithful: He is intimately present in every single fleeting moment. Through the constant flux, His constancy is revealed. Eliot glories in each moment because of this shared intimacy, and he works to construct a monument to God's faithfulness revealed in his fleeting moments. He tries to create a lasting testament, which does not weather, to the truth and beauty he sees only *through* weathering. This is the goal of the issue you are holding: to create a lasting work that attests to the beauty and faithfulness of the moments that do not last.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mitchell', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mitchell Schultz
Editor-in-Chief



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WHISTLING CANYON

Jackson Taylor

Hills are empty, white birds fly revolving
Below the crystal curtain willows rustle
The moon stoops to the ripples of the green maple
The wind drowns the sound of my zither

The radiant oreole overstays its welcome in the branches of the willow
Glittering beams scatter over the mountains casting a net over my skin
I shiver, when my hair is wet in the scented night mist
Many boats go out, but yours wonder in the reflection of clouds







WHAT IS WORTH SAVING IN THE FLOOD?

Nathan Brown

Four in the morning, and the Valdarno dam engineers were still awake.

“Should we discharge the dam?”

“Do you see how much water is piling up? We have to. The dam will burst if we don’t.”

Thus they discharged it. The newly freed waters rushed thirty miles an hour towards Florence, Italy, where the city’s inhabitants slept, largely unaware of the coming destruction. By seven-thirty a.m., the floodwaters arrived.

The waters burst into churches, art galleries, jewelry stores, and homes. They destroyed buildings, flooded army barracks, and suffocated the young and sick. In many places, the waters morphed into a disgusting sludge of water, mud, and black, greasy oil from broken boiler tanks. The flood churned, infiltrating everything it could—not listening to the cries of the families who had lost their homes, businesses, and livelihoods—only listening to the laws of gravity.

It was eight p.m. when the floodwaters began to recede, but enough damage had been done. The flood—known as the 1966 flood of the Arno—left thirty-five dead and damaged millions of manuscripts, books, paintings, and other works of art. Fortunately, many recognized the importance of restoring the deeply

historical Renaissance city and quickly came to help. The support was widespread. Jacqueline Onassis (JFK's wife) chaired a U.S. committee to repair frescoes around the city; some Germans repaired the Bardini museum's musical instruments; the armory of Vienna restored the Bargello museum's arms and armor; even Picasso auctioned one of his paintings and devoted the proceeds to general restoration efforts

But most strikingly, thousands of volunteers, including hundreds of international students, volunteered their time to dig through six hundred thousand tons of mud to retrieve and clean historical treasures. This outpouring of support is comparable to the recent Central Texas floods in July 2025—but most of the effort for Florence did not go to humanitarian aid. Why, then, did so many people feel the desire to dig through heavy, stinky, and occasionally dangerous mud, just to recover and restore these antiquated things?

These volunteers—perhaps unconsciously—recognized that conservation does not only feel satisfying, but is in fact morally good. The volunteers could have used their time to further their own self-interest by relaxing or working, but instead decided to conserve the damaged works for future generations they would never meet.

That choice embodies the moral virtues of self-restraint and compassion. Their action aligns with natural law: it is fitting to protect what is good, especially if it is vulnerable to loss. Scripture deepens our moral obligation to conserve. “*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.*”¹ We are called to steward what belongs to God, not to exploit or neglect it.

But this does not mean we should only focus on restoring the physical terrain of the earth. We should also seek to conserve human-created beautiful things that reflect God's glory.

How can we, in our daily lives, find valuable things that we should conserve? Well, most people use some form of social media, whether it's YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, X (Twitter), etc. These platforms are entertaining and very popular, and because of that, there is a deluge of new content being created all the time. Every minute, over 500 hours of video is uploaded to YouTube, ~16,000 videos are published to TikTok, and 350,000 tweets are posted on X.

Some of this content (that which educates and inspires) is undoubtedly useful. But most of the content is short, ephemeral content meant only to entertain users as they scroll through their algorithmically-customized infinite feed. Examples include videos on fashion trends and tweets on celebrity drama. The social media companies push this content because they know it will maximize their profits. The more entertaining and addicting content the algorithm serves to the user, the longer the user will stay online, which results in increased revenue for the company.

But this ephemeral content is not fulfilling for the human soul. This is not surprising. Scrolling dispenses

1 Psalm 24:1

occasional dopamine to you every couple minutes, but does not give meaningful satisfaction after the scrolling session is done. Also, the lack of involvement in the activity and the constant switching of attention makes it difficult for you to remember the content you consumed. Once you scroll past something, it is unlikely to ever resurface on your feed, because the content is low-quality and not worth conserving.

Therefore, the problem with consuming ephemeral content is two-fold: it is not deeply fulfilling and by giving it your attention, you encourage production of more ephemeral content.

What's the solution, then? One possibility is to divert at least some of your attention away from social media, which is designed to shove low-quality, ephemeral content at you, and towards genuinely good works. Read old books from Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson instead of reading tweets. Watch classic movies instead of short TikTok videos. It is not a requirement that genuinely good works must be old. However, works that are old and still relevant today have stood the test of time and are more likely to be of reasonably good quality.

We should recognize we are ultimately minor characters in the scope of God's grand narrative, and that devoting more attention to good works helps conserve works that reflect the glory of God.

The flood of the Arno volunteers were referred to as the "Mud Angels" for their tireless efforts in cleaning and restoration. In 1996, the mayor of Florence at the time gave an interview on the effects of the flood thirty years later. He said about the flood:

"[W]hile we [were] working away with our hands in the mud we gradually realised...that we were not working for ourselves but for the Florence of our grandchildren. In other words, what we were doing was dictated by the desire to give back...to future generations, so that it could be used for the spiritual growth of people who perhaps had yet to be born." —Mario Primicerio

May we have the same selflessness and concern for future generations as the Mud Angels did. It is unlikely that we will have the opportunity to rescue and restore historical artifacts from a historic flood, but we should do our best to conserve great works in our daily lives.



PUT THE CAMERA DOWN

Madelyn Hajovsky

I have a vivid memory from a couple years ago. On a plane, I watched a young girl in front of me pull out her phone when we began to taxi. The day was dull, the Potomac flat in the distance. I was duly bored by the airport's dull concrete, but the girl hit record when we reached the runway and I watched the whole routine from her screen: the blur of the tarmac, the earth falling away, the slow, quotidian climb into the troposphere until we broke through cloud cover. She had recorded all of it—all ten minutes of ascent. To her, this wasn't just takeoff: this was flight.

I smiled at her. My guess is she will never go back and watch that video again, at least not in its entirety. If she's anything like me, she'll probably stumble upon it when she's clearing out her storage and wonder what she was thinking, taking such a long video. But her young heart was crying out with a longing that I think is familiar to all of us, a longing to preserve something we feel to be fleeting, but valuable.

Since then, I've wondered about our relationship to the cameras in our pockets. I began noticing the way my friends, my family, and I lived our lives through our screens. We'd record a concert, a hilarious exchange, a touching moment, or anything worth remembering, as it happened, to then relive it only hours later. When conversation was no longer sufficiently engaging, we would turn to rewatching old videos of shared moments or looking at old pictures—instead of persisting through the boredom. Often, I find that I only remember pictures of my life instead of my first-hand experience of it.

Why does this matter? Individual memory is unreliable. So is communal memory: every time a story is told, it's altered slightly. Even if the photos we share bend our memory a little, isn't it better that we have more accurate representations of our lives?

Maybe. But I'm alarmed by the ease and alacrity with which we can and do turn to our cameras. Jacques Derrida, in his seminal lecture *Archive Fever*, claims that the process of archiving “produces as much as it records an event.”¹ What he means is that the methods we have of preserving the past necessarily constrain our perception of it. While Derrida is talking more about the material archive, the same can be said about our digital photos. Every time you snap a picture or take a video, you create the past. You shuck off other

1 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 16.





details of your surroundings in favor of the few you want to focus your attention on—details that, due to the limits of technology, are only visible and audible.

While audiovisual constraints make our experiences easier to share (my close friends and I have a routine of sending each other photo dumps to stay up to date on each other's lives), an over-reliance on a camera can start to shape the way we experience the world. We begin to think in terms of photo-ops. We interact in sound bites. Increasingly, experience becomes a spectacle—a display of light and sound instead of something to touch or feel. We are mute onlookers of our own lives.

I am advocating for a different relationship to photos: pictures are a creative activity and should be treated as such. They are a representation of something, not the thing itself. If you take pictures because you want to accurately document everything you experience, you might be living a virtual life. But if a picture is a composition of lines and colors and angles that communicate a larger experience, if a picture is only a horizon, a flurry of emotions and events coming to bear on an instant—then you may be living.

Our impulse to capture is the same as the impulse we have to name things. It's the same as our desire to write poems or compose songs or paint pictures. Pictures, therefore, as much as any other creative medium, deserve our prudence. With our phones, just as with a pen or with a brush, we're offered the ability to augment our powers of communication and memory, to exercise a degree of control over what we do or don't forget. With every use, we remove ourselves slightly from the present moment and step into history. But as much as we might wish to keep our experiences with us forever, and as much as cameras give us the illusion of being able to do so, we can't.

On the plane, we were soaring above a thick canopy of clouds. They looked a lot like a strange neighborhood to me, at times rising to a citadel-like height above the bottom layer. I looked at the girl in front of me again, snapped a picture, and sat back, watching the billowing whites and greys roll by. The engine hum made the sky feel quiet. There were shades of vapor in those clouds I don't know how to name.

A LITURGY FOR WALKING THROUGH RAIN

Madison Wu



Lord of all creation,
Your handiwork magnifies the splendor of Your glory.
The pattering of wind-blown droplets
gently echo Your steady peace.
Bringing us to wonder what a love
could pour out so graciously
and wash our souls clean.

You have made us as vessels, equipped
to love,
to follow,
to walk,
led by the Spirit
who breathes life into our fickle devotion.

Stepping under the proclaiming firmament,¹
let us not turn from awe.
Let us echo the ordained creation—the wonders
wrought by our Creator—
as showers descend.

In moments of hurried travel,
socks sodden with splashes of fallen drops,
increase our patience and delight
in the descending showers.
Remind us of Your purpose,
the goodness and mercy of the Good Shepherd²
that goes before us in all circumstances.

¹ Psalm 19:1

² Psalm 23:6



We are quick to turn inward,
head down in solitude, noise drowning
out the cold downpouring.
We are slow to turn to You.
Direct our eyes up in awe, stillness washing
over the floods of chaos.

Let us be refreshed, restored, renewed,
cleansed of our indifference and discontentment
as the cool molecules soak our garments.
Send us out of our idleness and comfort,
disrupt the plans we establish
in vain without consideration of Your sovereignty.³
Quench our earnest thirst.⁴
Douse us in your grace
upon grace⁵ and grant it to overflow
into the crevices of our being.

The droplets soak our faces,
distorting what we once could see.
We long to fully know
the things left in secret.⁶
Forgive us for the pride that puffs up
—inordinate self-focus—gathering
and gathering until it shatters.
Turned inward,
we are blinded by our selfish ambition,
oblivious to the weight of our sin.

3 Psalm 127:1

4 Psalm 63:1

5 John 1:16

6 Deuteronomy 29:29



Remnants of the downpour
splash beneath the soles of our shoes;
we avoid the puddles as more rain pools
among the earth.

Let us rejoice!
Renew our wonder!
Let us step out in faith.
Let us thirst⁷
for the overflow of your bountiful righteousness.
Let us dance in the splendor of Your provision,
the puddles of rain, the soggy clothes,
welcomed or not—still embraced.
Fill us with gratitude for the weather we once marveled in.
Children, jumping and stomping and splashing!
Attune our assumed sovereignty and
fix our gaze upon the Giver of true refreshment.
Settle our restless hearts.

Awaken and stir within
us a thankfulness for the waters
that You sent to cleanse and sustain.
In the arid land, Elijah called upon You, Lord.
You answered. Your hand supplied rushing rain.
Remind us: from everlasting to everlasting you are God.⁸

⁷ Matthew 5:6

⁸ Psalm 90:2



As we return to the shelter so kindly given,

Heavenly Father,
remind us to recognize Your hand in the downpour,⁹
the common grace that reflects Your steadfast love.

Holy Spirit,
remind us to rely on Your guidance,
eagerly drawing upon the bountiful streams.¹⁰

Jesus,
remind us to discern Your work
as you commanded.¹¹

You come like the rain:
steady.
You restore us to
seek first and press on,
attentive to Your faithful provision.

For You, O Lord our souls
wait in the quiet glory of Your handiwork.¹²
The stillness between storms,
a gentle whisper of Your presence.¹³
You water the earth, eliciting
all praise and honor and glory to the Maker who breathes life.

9 Job 5:10

10 John 7:38

11 Luke 12:56

12 Psalm 62

13 1 Kings 19:12



THE FORGETFUL SOJOURNER

Mitchell Schultz

The rain is comin' and I can smell it. I flip up the worn leather sides of my satchel and start to eat the sawdust flapjack inside before the humidity can spoil it. Stopped in the clearin' of the wooded foothills, I tear off a piece of the flapjack and shove it in my mouth with the abandon of a bearcat snatching a chicken from a homesteader. There's soot on my hand, still, and mama, does it taste bad mixed in with the flapjack. I hawk it out, like it's dip, and wipe the soot on the hip of my denim jeans, fading from use and overuse. I have to get another pair the next time I make a sale, I guess. I do need to make a sale. It's been a while and I'm hungry. The trees rustle and a bird flies out, probably scared of all my hawkin' and retchin'. I put the other half of the flapjack back into the side of the satchel and lean down to adjust the strip of cloth I fashioned to mend the hole in my boot sole. Those boots were damn expensive when I got 'em. I finish messin' with the boot and straighten up and start walkin' again.

On impulse, I hold my satchel up to the heart side of my chest and check it to find what I know to be there: the half flapjack from the morning in the last town, a busted banjo I'll mend by twilight the next few nights, and below that, the jars that still held pristine. I sell good product, I think. It's hard work I do, travelin' around sellin' bona fide, genuine 100% pure snake oil. Few people can afford such a luxury. It can fix most anything, I reckon. It's just that I can't say

for certain, because I certainly don't have need for a more youthful face or grease for wagon axles or glue for barn doors or a cure for my wife's hysteria. Don't have a wife to have hysteria! Ha! I guess God smiles on me sometimes after all. Gals are too much trouble. They break your heart. Yes sir, when I finally make a sale and get to have creamed corn that night. He sure smiles then! Creamed corn ain't never broke my heart.

I put the flapjack back down on my fine product and duck a low hangin' branch, and my old hips don't like it one bit. I keep walkin'. My forearms are dark with soot and dust and itchy and I barely recognize them as mine, but the bend in the river is coming up, and I can wash up there if I make double time the rest of the way into the mighty fine towwn of Dewees. I walk out to another clearin' and three big raindrops hit the scraggly sun-burned hair on my head and drip down my neck. Then there's a pause, like the world and the animals and plants and God and everyone is taking a deep breath, and I throw my satchel off to the side. The drops are big and come all at once and fast. The heat of the afternoon swirls like confused hogs catching wind of the slaughter and the drops form up to be a veritable downpour. I close my eyes and feel the drops run past my collar down my back. I take off my shirt and let the rain take the dust and soot with it. Salty mud washes in my eyes. I throw my head back and put my arms out and feel so good lettin' the rain get me all clean. I throw off my



boots and peel the soaked heavy wet denim off my legs, and start jumpin' and runnin' like a deer in a clearing. I feel free.

I start hootin' and hollerin', no two ways about it. I spin and hop and dance. I sing real bad, a tune I made up and I'll never know again, and I cry. I cry and cry like a mama's boy because it feels so guldarn good to be washed clean.

I don't care if no one can see me. They probably couldn't, anyway, seein' as how the rain is so heavy. I get tired of runnin' and jumpin' and I sit down in the clearing and grin and snuffle and I don't feel itchy or tired or even hungry. Shoot, I hardly feel like myself at all. I feel clean and all peaceful.

The rain goes for maybe half an hour. When it all stops, it stops just how it started, all at once. I sit there, bone-soaked and nearly buck-naked, and my common sense starts tellin' me that I look like a fool. I ain't no fool, so I grab up my clothes and get decent. I'm hungry. I pull the wet jeans back up over my knees and thighs and squat a little to try to make 'em sit better. I act careful as I can to keep me and my clothes clean. I grab my satchel up to my chest and check it. The outside is wet, but it was closed up shut, so the snake oil inside is still pris-teen. The rain didn't get it. There's a little tug in my gut. Hunger, I guess.

I gather my things, and I set off, soaking wet and walkin' again. The ground is soft from the rain, and mud starts gettin' caked on my boots and up the legs of my jeans. I stop and knock the boots with my hand and it gets most of the mud off, but it gets some on my hand, and I wipe it on the front of my shirt. I set pace again and start thinkin' about the next town. I need a sale so bad. I could get boots or corn or banjo strings. I remember when it was easy to sell and I had creamed corn every night. My stomach makes a sound like a riverbank of bullfrogs in the summer. My boots are caked with mud again and I stop and use the other hand to knock it off. The ground will dry soon and then I won't have to stop so often anymore. I keep trudging though. Just a few more hours to Dewees.

FROM SKIES ABOVE

Noah Thomason

The rain rolls off my face; Lord, You I bless,
For Your provision for Your children small.
From the dawn 'til now, as we profess,
Alone You've e'er ordained the rain to fall.
At first, You split the sea from skies above,
To make the land on which your people live.
As man, You calmed both furious tempests of
The sky and sinful hearts, Your grace to give.
You cleft a channel for the torrents, true,
To bring the Flood, creation to erase.
But unto Israel, manna fell as dew,
The Church replenish'd still by such a grace.
And on that Day, the skies, Lord, You shall fold,
The Fount revealed, that saints may Him behold.



THE MEASURE OF A GARDEN

Karis Chiao

The roses were beautiful. Their petals draped in satin spirals as their deep crimson poked out of the verdant fields. Not only were they the envy of the garden, these roses were Otto's pride and joy. Each one meticulously placed, measured, watered, and tended to by his aged and calloused hands. The scars on his fingertips were testament to the time he spent endlessly agonizing over the precise measurements to get these perfectly postured flowers. His life stemmed and blossomed from these roses—the taller and fuller they grew, the taller and prouder he stood.

Unfortunately, Otto's pride was where he often fell short, making him quick to assess his neighbors' lives and characters based on their gardens. Thus, years of this pattern turned him into a bitter man who judged all of those around him from behind his picket fence atop his rose petal pedestal.

However, there was no one Otto despised more than Ruth, his next door neighbor, who (in his opinion) was filled with youthful naivete despite her old age, much like her wildflowers that tilted their heads to the grass below. Ruth's flowers hardly caught the eyes of a passerby, nor were they photographed. They were insignificant and never looked at twice except for Otto who would peer out his window each morning to see her greeting her flowers, pluck a stray leaf or two, then head back inside. Nothing was calculated, studied, or painstakingly pulled. He was disgusted with the little effort, if any at all, that she put into these flowers because he knew how beautiful they could become. On multiple occasions, Otto considered offering his advice to Ruth but always withheld out of the fear of them blooming into ones more alluring than his own. Despite his ostentatious nature, Ruth was left unbothered, nursing her flowers with nothing more than coaxing words as Otto watched begrudgingly. It was not until an overgrown weed from Ruth's garden stretched its parasitic fingers over to Otto's lawn that he took matters into his own hands, marching to her door and pounding his fist against the wood. In

a heated argument, Otto's mouth flew with anger and spit spewed from his lips. His rage blinded his senses, so all he remembers from this confrontation was Ruth pushing past his heaving shoulders, yanking the weed from its roots, shoving it into his open hands, and closing the door firmly in his face. Since that interaction, Otto had made it his mission to ensure Ruth's flowers always wilted in the shadow of his own.

Months passed, spring came, and the sun beat down on Otto's neck. He tilted his head to the sky in disdain before turning back towards his roses. Their petals still glistened in the sun, but they now had thin dull edges that curled outwards in an ugly brown. Otto grazed one of the stems in a soft sorrow, feeling its brittleness. A wretched look crossed his face as he once again looked towards the dry and barren sky and saw nothing but blue. Four weeks had already gone by since the last rainfall, and despite the cheery laughter of the children on sidewalks, Otto tore through his elaborate gardening manuals in restless agony, searching for a solution.

What made him angrier was watching Ruth continue with her routine, endlessly checking her dying flowers that withered into the ground. She worked for nothing. He could see she did not care whether they lived or if they died and he decided he despised her entire being for she was too lazy to change her regimen.

"The rain will come." Otto heard Ruth cheerily tell their neighbor one day as he exhaustively dug trenches for his new irrigation system. *"No need to worry. It'll all work out— it always does."*

Otto nearly ripped the \$500 pipes out in utter rage hearing her words, but instead clutched his sun hat in a silent fury. Here he was, crouching in his new fertilizer with caked fingernails, listening to this woman toss her garden aside as if it were no better than the garbage cans that were

picked up every Saturday. Nevertheless, Otto bit his tongue, swallowed his sour words, and let his sweat and bitterness water the roses as he labored on.

Ruth's eyes shifted towards the groveling silhouette of who she knew was Otto slaving away over his new irrigation system. She saw the clean-cut cardboard boxes arrive on his doorstep the day before and could not help but laugh at their rigid resemblance to him. She never understood Otto's obsession over his and her own garden, but she did not let it haunt her, shrugging off his incessant judgment and hostile stares—her garden was good and arguably pleasing enough for the amount of work she put in, or rather the lack thereof. As Ruth turned back toward the door to her house, she glimpsed at her fading garden. In a transient moment, the scales fell from Ruth's eyes and she saw her stems' shriveled appearance, almost akin to used cigarettes, and the petals that had once held life were now ancient scrolls that bore nothing more than a story. Ruth's mind couldn't help but wander to their confrontation months ago and recalled his brief advice masked in anger, *"You would rather have a grave and call it beautiful than lift a finger and watch it grow."* Maybe Otto was right. Maybe her negligent behavior was the ugliest part of her wilting bed, and maybe—just maybe—her absent efforts were worth criticizing.

Ruth went inside and watched Otto from the window in quiet reflection. Admittedly, a twinge of desire and quiet envy surfaced as she recalled the stunning beauty of what used to be flourishing in Otto's gardenbeds. She considered pruning her stems, even looking for the gloves she once owned. But the thought passed and did not stop her from turning through questions. If rain was coming, why should she interfere? Why would she consider purchasing \$500 worth of technology to control the most beautiful part of the natural

world? To what extent would sacrificing her life for her garden be worth all that time and effort?

From that day forward Ruth observed Otto with a genuine curiosity and bewilderment as he worked and worked and worked. When she would leave in the morning for her daily coffee walks and return with an empty cup in hand, he was there. On Sundays, she took the bus downtown to visit her daughter in the city, coming back late in the night, and he was still there in his pitiful, slouched squat over his plot of flowers that continued to retreat into the soil.

“I’m concerned for him,” Ruth said as she called her daughter weeks later, *“I promise you I’m not crazy. He has not moved. Every day, all day, it’s just him and those stupid, stupid roses... I mean yes, they have grown a little... Yeah, they’re maybe a bit more red than before, but still drooping... No, exactly. No garden is worth all this.”*

Minutes earlier, Otto had watched the mailman drop Ruth’s package onto his doorstep in a rush, disappearing before Otto could stop him. Reluctant but resigned, Otto climbed the steps of Ruth’s house with the package tucked beneath his arm. Just as he raised his hand to knock, he hesitated, letting it fall to his side. From behind the door, Ruth’s muffled voice drifted through the wall.

“No garden is worth all this trouble.”

His gut twisted, both out of rooted abhorrence and twisted apprehension. What did she know? What gave her the right to ridicule his lifestyle and choices when she sat idly by and actively turned her face away from her field of perish? Nevertheless, Otto tapped on her door hesitantly and faced the inevitable. Ruth answered, her eyes widening in shock as he handed her the package.



“Mornin’. Mailman dropped this off at my address by accident.”

“Oh, thank you. That’s very kind of you.”

Ruth said nothing as Otto stared at her, but a mutual look of understanding passed between them. Otto nodded in an implied “you’re welcome” before heading into his home and shutting the door behind him. With a heaving sigh he sank into his couch, relieved his aching joints, and entered a trance of reevaluation. The past three weeks he exerted himself into the rosebed, weeding, fertilizing, and watering over and over and over again. And yet, his delicate treasures still cowered under the heat of the sun. He had not visited his sister in a month now, and his friends from chess continued to call him every Wednesday asking where he had been. His refrigerator lacked produce or any real food, and his hired cleaner had not come in weeks because his house was practically vacant. *Was it worth all this trouble?* In great fatigue and a subtle pang of remorse, Otto closed his



weary eyelids and drifted off to sleep, listening to familiar, rhythmic taps dance on his window.

When Otto awoke he routinely trudged over to his kitchen sink to retrieve a coffee mug, and as he rinsed it he looked up and out the window above. His mouth dropped open and he gasped audibly. Through a blurred, glasses-less view, Otto squinted to see droplets dotting the pane in an array of crystals. Without a word, he abandoned his coffee and rushed outside to be greeted with the wet air sweeping across his skin. Tears of happiness almost escaped from his eyes as he felt relief take its place on his aching and hunched shoulders. His socks grew damp as he stood in the grass, filled with awe and perplexity. He looked to his left at Ruth's garden, and saw the sad browns weighed down under the rain. Now, *he* pitied *her* because no amount of rain could make her flowers grow again.

Over the next few days, rain continued to fall, and Otto watched with steady, unspoken solace. His

roses began to straighten their spines, and the petals were soft to touch. *Ultimately*, Otto thought, *Ruth was right*. His garden was not worth all that work: he had sacrificed his life and his relationships for some flowers that repeatedly refused his touch, and it bruised his pride to realize the fate of these roses was never truly in his hands.

Ruth, however, left her house after the period of rain to observe her own garden and the puddles that gathered where her petals had once been. She could see the soil had darkened beneath the wilted brown, but stopped short of life—nothing had changed. Her flowers were dead and, if anything, they looked worse than before the rain had come. She kicked the dirt in frustration, but deep down she knew her lack of effort tended to this grave that rested before her. *Ultimately*, Ruth thought, *Otto was right*. She did not lift a finger, and expected her flowers to grow, but now here they were—reduced into the dried out mulch she had planted them in months before.

In the end, his garden could not flourish through work alone, but nor could hers grow solely on expectation.





IN ITS RIGHT PLACE

Mollie Walters

She was Hindu and that was an issue. “Issue,” Mom said. Not “dealbreaker” or “hiccup.” It wouldn’t end the relationship, nor would it interrupt. It was something that needed fixing.

Solomon was surprised. He had planned to win over her parents, not his own. Sure, he attended church every Sunday with Mom, but it was like mowing the lawn. He did it because Mom liked tidiness. Tidiness was what the Bible-verse wall decor from Hobby Lobby and under-a-minute prayers before meals were. So when Solomon told Lakshmi on their first date, “I’m a bad Christian,” it was true.

Mom said, “Keep her a secret from me, fine, just don’t have sex with her. Getting attached will make you compromise your beliefs.”

Solomon shrugged. He knew Mom was goading him into arguing, but he couldn’t be bothered. All of his anger was funneled at the guy who’d ratted on him.

“The flowers look nice.”

Mom beamed.

“They do, don’t they?”

Next to the island in the kitchen, Mom rearranged the bouquet Solomon had bought at the grocery store. He had agonized over his choices—not because of the price; dates with Lakshmi were his only expense—before settling on tiger lilies: bright, open, and exotic. Mom tied them with a blue ribbon, the “complementary color.” Solomon scooped them off the island, kissed her forehead, and snatched his car keys.

She said, “Luxme must be—”

“Lakshmi,” Solomon corrected.

He disliked her name. Lakshmi, the Hindu goddess of fortune, sounded too Indian. Just like how Solomon, the Hebrew king whose wives turned his heart to their gods, was too ironic.

“Lakshmi,” she repeated, “must be ugly. That is why you hid her away.”



When Solomon went on dates with Lakshmi, he lied to Mom, saying he had picked up an extra shift or was going to get his guitar re-strung. Because he feared that Mom would turn Lakshmi into one of her stories.

Mom was a storyteller. She was a storyteller the day her husband left without saying why, the night her father got killed in a stickup, and when those girls playing house wouldn't let her join "just because." In place of explanations, she put stories. Stories that concealed what she didn't like. Stories that told her she understood what couldn't be understood. Stories, like the Garden of Eden, that began at the beginning and carried on forever.

Solomon didn't know what to say to Mom, so he didn't say anything. He headed out to his '86 Chevy truck. The paint job was scratched, the cloth seats were ripped, and, since he worked as a driver, its poor gas mileage was inconvenient. Yet he had told Gideon that he cherished the truck because it had been his father's. But that wasn't true. Solomon didn't care about his father, whose absence since toddlerhood was more factual than felt. The truth was Solomon didn't know what it meant to sell a truck and buy a new car, and he didn't want to learn.

Solomon had half an hour before when he promised to pick up Lakshmi, so he took a detour.

He parked in the driveway behind the black and white Ford Police Interceptor stripped of its police markings. Gideon had bought it cheap from the Texas Surplus store. Gideon liked the tinted windows, the deer guard, and the way other drivers slowed down, mistaking for a moment that Gideon was someone in power.

Solomon left the bouquet of tiger lilies in the truck. Gideon pulled the garage door open. Behind him was a magnet-covered refrigerator, three bicycles, and a drum kit.

Gideon said, "Heard your truck coming."

Solomon said, "You had no right to tell my mom about Lakshmi."

"Would a Mountain Dew make you less mad?"

"Sure. Thanks."

Gideon got a Mountain Dew from the twenty-four pack sitting by the refrigerator and tossed it to Solomon. In high school, these were favorites. But as Solomon took a sip, the taste was flat and unremarkable—like Gideon himself. Solomon tried to remember what was interesting about him, what they might've talked about before Gideon left town, but they never said much to one another. Their two-man, unnamed band made enough noise. Solomon played guitar; Gideon, drums.

Solomon and Gideon had accepted scholarships from the same music school, chosen an apartment near campus, and registered for the same classes. People warned Solomon about what

proximity does to friends, but he'd thought, what do they know? Friendship survived despite disagreement on a band name, Gideon's parents banishing their playing, "that racket," to this garage, and Solomon bailing before the first semester.

Solomon watched Gideon load a U-Haul and leave, sensing that it wasn't laziness, homesickness, or the insecurity of a career in music that made him stay, but love: a tiny, basic love of familiarity. Familiarity was his singular love until he met Lakshmi in May.

After Lakshmi kissed him, Solomon didn't think before texting Gideon about her. If he had thought, he might've realized Gideon would be upset.

Gideon leaned against the refrigerator. Solomon stood on the line separating the driveway and the garage.

"I didn't mean to hurt you," Gideon said.

"I don't believe you."

"Whether you believe me or not doesn't change the fact."

Solomon stared at him.

Gideon said, "Fine. It's what I've always told you. You have to get used to pursuing your intentions as soon as they come. The bolder the desire, the more impossible it seems when the moment is lost. You'll doubt yourself, hate yourself, and wake up one day to realize you never acted."

Solomon had to stop him. Gideon was going to say what hadn't been said but his parents suspected and condemned. Gideon was going to say what Solomon knew but pretended not to. Gideon was going to say that he loved Solomon. Not as a friend, not as a brother in Christ.

Or maybe he wasn't going to say that. Solomon had guessed wrong before, misinterpreting a shaky voice or trembling lip. Still, he couldn't take that chance.

Solomon interrupted, "I prefer your lectures on music theory."

Gideon sighed like he did when he lost the rhythm. Good, Solomon thought. Their friendship was a constant in the equation of Solomon's life, and Solomon would've hated to rework the numbers. He hoped having a girlfriend would make Gideon love someone else, someone who wanted him.

It hadn't.

Gideon said to his hands, “You wanted to tell your mom about Lakshmi, yeah? You said you did. But it’s been three months and you haven’t. It took me getting away from you, but I understand now. You’re not a serious person, Solomon.”

“Name one serious person who’s happy. You can’t. I aim to be happy, and I was happy before you broke my trust.”

“That makes two of us.”

Solomon scoffed.

“Lakshmi’s waiting for me.”

Gideon looked up.

“Your mom didn’t make you break up with her?”

“No.”

Gideon opened his mouth, but before he could speak, Solomon punched his shoulder.

“Look, man, let’s just agree to move on.”

This was Friday afternoon, the end of a fifty-hour workweek. Solomon got to know Houston well as a pizza delivery driver: the neighborhoods, outlet malls, and graffiti. He slowed down when passing new tags to appreciate them. After he and Gideon stopped talking, Solomon pretended he was in conversation with those spray-painted words. He talked back by way of a black, six-string Washburn. Another thing his father left behind. Guess he had been in a hurry.

Solomon had practiced guitar at the park, leaning against a tree. It felt more genuine that way, like he was a cowboy on the open range. “Shredding” was a good word for playing guitar because music tore you up. If he perfected Van Halen’s “Spanish Fly,” for example, he wouldn’t have to be a whole person anymore but fragments from which he could pick out the best and trash all others. But this became unimportant when someone eclipsed the sun.

“Do you play any other songs? We’re sick of listening to you butcher this one.”

On their picnic blanket, her friends giggled. Lakshmi was smiling, careless. Solomon felt blessed just because a beautiful girl was speaking to him. He figured anything more would corrupt. But when she kissed him underneath that same tree, he was holy.

That was three months ago.

Solomon pulled into the high school. The cheerleaders did their summertime practice on the football field. The ex-captain, who had graduated that year and was onboarding the new captain, spotted his truck, broke formation, and ran to him. They collided like two splotches of paint. The orange and black petals of the bouquet scattered.

“You’re early,” Lakshmi said.

“Get in.”

Solomon and Lakshmi drove out of the city, parked in an open field, and got in the truck bed. Solomon arranged the decorative pillows he had stolen from Mom. Lakshmi rested her head on his chest. He imagined her doing this with someone else before she immigrated from India. He welcomed jealousy, that green energy, because he was tired of people he felt almost nothing for. Her face shone with moonlight.

“If I could, I would like to become a star,” Lakshmi confessed. “Not forever, but enough time to get a feel for it.”

“I’d rather be a dog.”

She laughed.

“I’m serious. I wouldn’t have to worry about paperwork or politics. I’d look forward to going on walks, playing fetch, and eating dog food. Stop laughing; fast food’s basically the same thing. The point is, someone else would have it all planned out for me.”

“I had a dog back in India. Her name was Marshmallow. Might’ve been a poodle or something, but she was defenseless. Some strays got into our backyard, and there was a fight. I didn’t see her die, just the blood on my dad’s hands.”

Solomon was offended, but he didn’t know why. Lakshmi would start on the pre-med track this upcoming fall. Besides, she was a woman, a person. Of course she knew about blood and death. Yet he was offended. But he forgot his offense when he lost his virginity.

Solomon dropped Lakshmi off. He washed the stains out of Mom’s pillows with the garden hose. Only as he took off his boots did he realize he was offended because Lakshmi wasn’t innocent. No, not innocent. He wanted her to be ignorant. If she was ignorant, then it wasn’t her fault for believing in idols. God had an understanding, wrinkly face that invited you to have a beer. He’d give Lakshmi a freebie until Solomon won her soul. Winning her soul meant Solomon wouldn’t have to learn about Dharma, Diwali, or other words he couldn’t pronounce on sight.

They’d marry in the Western way, with a pastor. Solomon would pay for all the Bible-verse wall decor she wanted. He’d drive the kids to school, sports, and out, out on the Texan highways. He’d take birthdays way too seriously. Just like Mom did.

Weeks passed. Her questions kept coming.

Mom asked, "How dark is she?"

Solomon didn't know what she wanted to hear. Would the woman who told him for twenty years to play outside be pleased with "tanned, a sun-glow"? Or would she rather "passes for white"?

When he repeated the question, Lakshmi laughed.

"Take your mom to a hardware store and point me out among the floorboards."

Mom asked, "Would she marry you just for citizenship?"

"Absolutely," Lakshmi told him. "After I make you sign a prenup."

Mom asked, "When do I get to meet her?"

"I don't know, Solomon," Lakshmi said. "When do I get to meet her?"

Her entitled tone wasn't fair. Solomon hadn't met her parents yet, and she hadn't asked if he wanted to. Was Lakshmi ashamed because he wasn't pursuing higher education or because he was white?

On Sunday morning, Mom made Solomon wear a suit. There was spite in her request, but he ignored it.

They drove to church.

The church was all peeling, white paint and oaken rafters. A hundred people made up the congregation. Attendance was timely. At 9:30 a.m., Solomon and Mom sat down two pews behind Gideon's family, who didn't look up.

The caffeinated pastor climbed to the pulpit. No instruments shared his stage because of some scripture, and that was too bad. Solomon would've liked someone to play guitar. Or drums. It was raining. The rooftop rumbled and the thunder sounded as if God was answering Solomon, "How's that for music, son?"

The pastor pointed to the ceiling.

He shouted, "It starts raining as soon as I get up here. Satan doesn't want this message being heard, but I aim to be louder than him."

The congregation laughed. Solomon laughed, too, because the pastor attributed to Satan what Solomon attributed to God. And that was funny because if it wasn't funny, it was sad.





The pastor said, “Our world isn’t a world of neutrality. You’re either for Him or against Him. Every action, every thought is claimed territory. The war doesn’t stop if you pretend it’s not happening.”

Solomon let his mind escape to Lakshmi. Her nose ring. Her forehead mole.

“People’ll often ask me, ‘Why, when I put my faith in Jesus, do things get worse?’ I think that’s sometimes because you weren’t a threat to the Enemy before.”

Her underwear was lacy, with a bra that unhooked in the front.

“More often, I think your life was always bad. You just refused to notice.”

Solomon shuffled past Mom, not facing her, and out of the church.

In the parking lot, Solomon sat in his truck. The windshield wipers sloshed rain left and right. He could ignore Mom’s rage-baiting, Gideon’s feelings, and the pastor’s sermons every day except for today. Today, the pastor asked him to choose: God or Lakshmi. Solomon’s answer disturbed him. The answer was “I don’t know.”

Half an hour later, Mom banged on the window. Solomon opened the door.

He began, “Sorry, I—”

“I’m driving. Give me your keys.”

Solomon handed them over. Mom got in the driver’s seat, and he got in the passenger’s seat. By the second stoplight, which made the raindrops glow red, Mom was crying.

“I dream about the stockings I’ll hang for my grandchildren at Christmas. Which Easter baskets, filled with what eggs and candy, I’ll give to them. I want to be a good grandma because I want to be a good mom. Maybe I’m overbearing, and maybe I ask insensitive questions, but I never made you feel guilty for staying home. I wanted to believe I had created a safe, beautiful home—that you would tell me the truth. Instead, you made up a Hindu girlfriend to hide what you and Gideon are.”

Solomon choked.

“Jesus Christ, Mom. Did Gideon say something? Whatever he said, it was a lie.”

“Then I’ll add it to the list. You lied about not caring when your dad left, about wanting to become a musician, and about what you did to my goddamn pillows.”

Gideon's betrayal hurt, but that didn't make Solomon open the door. What made him open the door was that Mom only believed what she told herself. Whatever Solomon might've said wouldn't've mattered.

The light turned green. Mom stepped on the gas. Solomon jumped out of the truck. The asphalt of the intersection broke the skin on his hands and knees. Mom screamed. Tires screamed. Solomon got up and ran.

When he reached Lakshmi's house, Solomon was soaked. He didn't want a bouquet he had to rearrange and tie up. He wanted Lakshmi as she was. He didn't want Christmas stockings or Easter eggs that he trashed when the season was over. He wanted Lakshmi for life.

But his current life wasn't right for her. Solomon had to reapply to music school, talk things over with Gideon, and convince Mom he was serious.

Lakshmi opened the door. In her eyes was clarity.

"You wore a suit to break up with me?"

"For me, this is a big occasion. Don't I look handsome?"

They laughed a little.

"Lakshmi," he whispered, feeling the way his lips and tongue sounded out the name. "Can we try again in a few years?"

"Waiting won't make you brave."

She didn't believe in him, and he couldn't blame her.





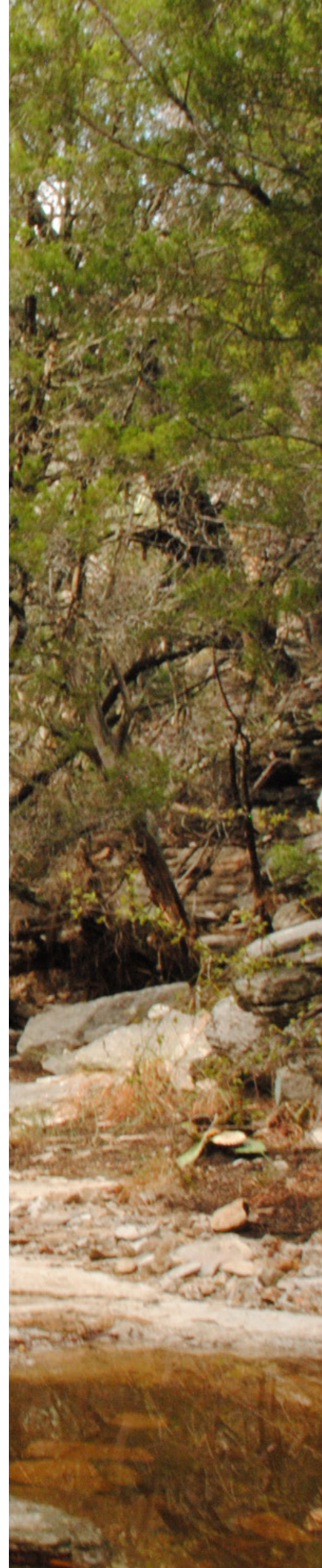


HOLY WATER

Isaiah Pyle

Water turned to blood, then back again,
A warning of the price that must be paid.
Water turned to wine, renamed as blood,
Sacramental memory displayed.
Dripping flow of blood from Savior slain,
Echoed rhythms of the words He prayed,
While water from His wounded side bestowed
New life upon the world like scarlet rain.

First, the river Nile turned to blood,
A drop for every act of sin and shame.
Next, producing wine to follow food
Christ's transforming power was displayed.
Then He blessed the wine and called it His
Blood, and bread His flesh: His death proclaimed.
Last, he shed His blood that we may bathe
Our souls in living water, born again,
No more to thirst:
Quenched beneath the flood of holy rain.





HOW CAN WE RESPOND TO THE IMMENSITY OF INJUSTICE?

Sarah Adams

Recently, a night in watching the 1996 animated film “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” exposed the fragility of my mental state. As I watched Quasimodo and Esmerelda struggle under the unjust rule of Frollo, parallels to modern-day atrocities plagued my mind. I stopped watching the movie, overwhelmed by echoes of news stories and the feeling that I needed to do something in response to what I was seeing.

For years, but especially in the past few months, I have felt this burden when reading about tragedies and violations in our nation and around the world. Human beings deprived of vital nutrition due to war or political gridlock. Immigrants denied just hearings. Countless left without equal access to health services, quality education, or any sense of stability. Voices on social media exhorted me to take action. I agreed with the voices! I should do something. But I felt unsure about how to proceed.

Many of these posts included action steps: boycotts, petitions, protests. These are all meritable pursuits, but they did little to assuage the paralyzing helplessness I felt. The small actions in my power seemed trivial: no

signature or call to a representative could do much to counteract the worldwide enormity of injustice.

In moments like these, I have found only one practice that can pull me out of this helpless spiral: turning to my faith. Facing the weight of the world, I find peace in my belief that God has promised to restore perfect justice.

In the Bible, the justice of God has a dual meaning for humanity. On one hand, it teaches that humans are sinful beings who ought to fear the righteous justice of the Lord. The first major instance of this is the banishment of Adam and Eve from paradise after they disobeyed God's commands.¹ The second is the destruction of nearly all of humanity in the Great Flood after they saddened God with their corruption.² Perhaps it is the remembrance of these grim acts of justice against the sinful human race that inspired the prophet Amos to write "Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!"³

With this in mind, how can God's justice be a source of hope? Only through the work of Christ. Through Christ's sacrifice, God has provided an opportunity for anyone to receive deliverance from their deserved judgement.⁴ This undeserved gift allows the redeemed to see past the fury of God's stringent justice unleashed in order to find hope in the perfectly just world He will create.

God has promised in Scripture to create a new heaven and earth where suffering no longer exists.⁵ He will right the wrongs done by humans to one another and raise

up "the fatherless and the oppressed."⁶ These promises speak powerfully to the current brokenness of the world by demonstrating God's desire to restore joy to all but particularly to those who have experienced oppression.

These promises might seem to say that humanity should sit back and wait for God to take care of everything, but God has a different calling. The Bible argues that, because of the certainty of God's justice, it is not only possible to act but imperative. God invites humanity to join His work of restoration not passively but with zeal and fervor.⁷ He speaks through the prophet Micah, commanding His people to "do justice and to love kindness."⁸ The mission of the church has always included practical care for the marginalized and needy, just as Jesus patterned through His ministry of healing.⁹ The people of God are called to advocate, care, and give in His name.

We would not be the first in history to be inspired to action by God's promise to restore justice. For example, Civil Rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. found motivation in Scripture as he worked to resist the dehumanizing practice of segregation. In his legendary "I Have a Dream" speech, he punctuated his desire for equity by referencing two verses about the Lord's forthcoming justice. He first invoked Isaiah 40:4-5: "every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low." Later, he cries out "we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like a mighty stream," quoting Amos 5:24. The power of these words is palpable—on the recording, the crowd cheers loudly after each verse.

It is important to note the urgency expressed in Scripture alongside these promises. Like in the verse from Amos that King invoked or the story of the Great Flood, the

Lord's justice is described in Scripture as a rushing flow of water that causes both renewal and destruction. James Baldwin, an author who helped lay the ideological foundation for the Civil Rights Movement, referenced the Flood in his essay "The Fire Next Time." He quotes a spiritual song which warns that "God gave Noah

1 Genesis 3
2 Genesis 6
3 Amos 5:18
4 Romans 5:8-9
5 Revelation 21:1-4
6 Psalm 10:18

7 Romans 12:11
8 Micah 6:8
9 Acts 2:44-45, Luke 4:38-41

the rainbow sign, No more water, The fire next time.” This refers to the promise God made to Noah after the Flood that he would not again destroy humanity with water, with the rainbow serving as a sign of this promise.¹⁰ In this context, with the reminder that God still promises to ultimately punish evil, it serves as an alarming call to action against racial injustice.

With this devotion to both hope and action, these Civil Rights leaders shaped a movement that sparked fundamental shifts towards racial equality in America. These leaders found the strength to act in the knowledge that God can and will restore the world to perfect peace. We can follow in their hopeful-yet-alert mindset. The knowledge that the God of justice holds all of human affairs in His hands empowers followers of Christ to take confident steps towards making the world more like His kingdom. We do not have to be paralyzed by the enormity of what we cannot do because justice is not on our shoulders! As we meet each new day and its accompanying torrent of headlines, let us reflect on God’s promises that both bring peace and inspire action in the midst of catastrophe.

¹⁰ Genesis 9:15



A LITURGY FOR CAMP MYSTIC

Margaret Grace Voelter

(A Note from the Author: No words can fill what was lost by the catastrophic flooding on July 4, 2025, in the Texas Hill Country. My hope is simply to provide a liturgy that Mystic girls can pray together as our community continues to heal.)

“Father in Heaven Bless us we pray
strengthen and guide us all through the day
comfort and keep us, show us thy will
Thinking of Mystic be with us still”

Lord this place as we remember it,
‘On earth as it is in heaven’
Belonged to you before it belonged to us
Help me surrender the land inside the green gates
and the girl who I was within them
Remind me my identity does not lie in those cabins
as much as they have made me who I am today,
My identity is found in you, Lord Jesus

Father God, we soberly look to you
We lift our eyes to the hill country
Where does our help come from?
Our help comes from you, Almighty God,
Maker of heaven and earth¹
How can such terrible devastation
fall upon such good-hearted people?
Father, when I do not understand your will,
Teach my heart to trust you anyway.

¹ Psalm 121:1-2

Life is fragile and priceless and fleeting,
Yet devastatingly beautiful,
Lord these precious daughters first belonged to you
before we received them into our lives, our hearts, our families
Yet we bear unspeakable grief at their absence
Blessed be the God of all comfort
Who comforts us in all our affliction,²
For as we share in Christ's sufferings so through Christ,
We share abundantly in comfort too

"O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console"³
God as our community continues to mourn
Lead me to care earnestly for those around me
Empower me to extend your kindness to its furthest reaches
Let friends near and far feel dearly loved

"Blessed be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above
When we asunder part it brings us inward pain
But we will still be joined in heart and hope to meet again"

2 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3 Prayer of St. Francis





THE STRAW MAN

Cara McMillan

Within the alabaster walls of the city, P.W. Thice stumbles upon the shell of a scarecrow, blown from some distant quarter onto the land he halfheartedly farms. Cold sunshine frustrates his balding head to the point of delirium, and he rescues the new friend from greedy shoots struggling towards a slice of atmosphere. He carries the scarecrow to his ramshackle barn, deciding to feed the stranger straw.

The scarecrow eats until the body becomes a bit less emaciated, the legs a bit less puny, the arms less frail, more manly. Last comes the face. Thice shoves straw laterally, vertically, in bizarre geometric patterns, but the face remains poised in an uncomfortably direct, judgemental smile. No matter – his friend certainly would not wish to bear the shame of complete unemployment, so Thice props him onto a T of cherrywood and posts him in the garden, just outside the humble kitchen window of his cabin.

The morning routine of raspberry collection yields conversation.

“God gives a man riches, wealth, and honor, so that he lacks nothing his heart desires; but God does not allow him to enjoy them,” murmurs the scarecrow.

“I have heard some in the town say this! Are you their teacher? If so, tell me more, friend,” replies the pupil.

The scarecrow obliges. “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evils.”

“Why, what then shall I do?” The bare head scrunches in unseemly confusion.

“Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys,” booms the scarecrow with chilling authority.

Joyful fear coloring his steps, Thice sets about his farm labor with new vigor, heretofore unheard of in his quadrant of the alabaster. Every morning for forty days, he rises and picks berries for a meager breakfast, and every morning the scarecrow says the same, or sometimes nothing at all. Thice grows every day more certain that diligent work is good in its own right, and he gladly toils under the warming sun.

The farmer’s meager shoots grow tall enough to stoop down with heavy fruit, and the tilling hero waits to gather them in his wheelbarrow until they visibly boast of sweetness. P.W. had never cared to produce more than would feed his own loudmouthed stomach, but now uncomfortable excess threatened to rot atop his land.

“Scarecrow,” says P.W. Thice, remembering the first directive of the teacher, “What does one do when a virtuous toil brings about too much material for one to righteously enjoy?”

A piercing directive follows: “Sell your possessions, and give to the needy.”

The wheelbarrow struggles along the cobblestones as P.W. politely stops the townsfolk in request for modest pay for the berries. P.W. generously tells the interested passersby to pay what they believe to be fair, that the proceeds will go to the needy, and the passersby give more than the berries are worth. P.W.'s wheelbarrow returns home full of money, and his heart fills with gratitude for neighbors who part so readily with metal coins.

"As long as I do nothing with it but serve the poor and give it away," Thice thinks to himself, "this money is not a scourge on my righteousness." He nods through the window-pane to his ever-smiling friend, glad to have found such an affirming companion.

The next day, the sun shines its validation down on vain berries, and in their swelling pride the farmer determines they must be extinguished by hungrier mouths. He takes them to their judgement, and returns home with another wheelbarrow of riches. For forty days, much of the same follows, with modest fluctuations in the weight of the wheelbarrow on either end of the journey.

Each day, Thice would search the white walls for signs of where the needy could be found, but no clue presented itself. He thought harvest time must be profitable for everyone, and perhaps the money would be needed in the season of intense sun and hard ground.

The harvest ends, and P.W. Thice can no longer see through the windowpane of his hut for the riches stacked on every surface of his home. He feels no discomfort, as he has not spent a single farthing and fully intends to use the post-harvest season to return the wheelbarrow loads to the townspeople, one day at a time.

"What a lovely reversal it will be! To give, take, and give again," he thinks. Through the window, he can barely make out his friend's smile.

As the celestial sphere begins to scorch the ground to the point of punishing unusability, P.W. shovels the cash into the wheelbarrow and hauls his happy burden to town.

In the square, he stands in the middle, momentarily unsure how to disperse the funds. Surely it should not be a spectacle, for that would give him wrongful pleasure. No, no, better to withhold the credit from himself.

He leaves the money on a popular street corner, with a sign that reads, "Take as much as you need!"

He sneaks off home, proud only of the advice his friend has given and his solid attempt to follow it.

The next day, upon returning to the square, P.W. Thice detects no change to the wheelbarrow since last he saw it.

"Excuse me!" He hails a widow passing by, "Why has no one accepted kindness from a stranger?"

She brushes him off, casts an odd glance, and coldly replies, "Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? It is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. The teacher told us so."

"Odd woman!" He thinks, but restrains himself and instead asks, "What teacher?"

Two separate eyebrows knit into one as the woman casts a skeptical glance in Thice's direction.

"You know him well." She bustles hurriedly to her pious destination. P.W. glances around the square, and discovers that a wide berth has been given to both him and the wheelbarrow.

"This is no place for greed and excess!" Bellows an authoritative man from a bell tower.

Thice, stunned, returns home with his wheelbarrow full.

As the toe of his boot pivots onto the rutted path to the cabin's front gate, the vases of clouds crack, burst, and spill the last rain of the season onto the already-baking ground. He brushes through the unlocked gate, slips from soil to porch, and briefly rests his back against the hewn wooden doorframe. After a moment of wonderment, and watching the small ruts become little canals, he slips through the front door.



An old oil lamp gives Thice just enough light to perceive the scarecrow slumped in Thice's father's old armchair, that inane smile unchangingly plastered on the straw man's face. Every command of the friend, the fiend, now crashes back into the farmer's mind with a clarity that only accompanies the recognition of evil. The villain had removed himself from the cherrywood cross Thice made for him. Surprise gives way to confusion, confusion to anger.

"Who knitted you together, who did you teach, and why were you found empty on my land?" Thice pours out in a heated rush.

The scarecrow, meeting the end of his regurgitative capacity in the face of an honest question, replied, "Knit together by the men of the alabaster town, I read from a book they had but could not read, and I taught them industry. When everyone had more than enough to eat, they began to fear their money and to fear life without it, so they emptied me. You were the one that filled me again."

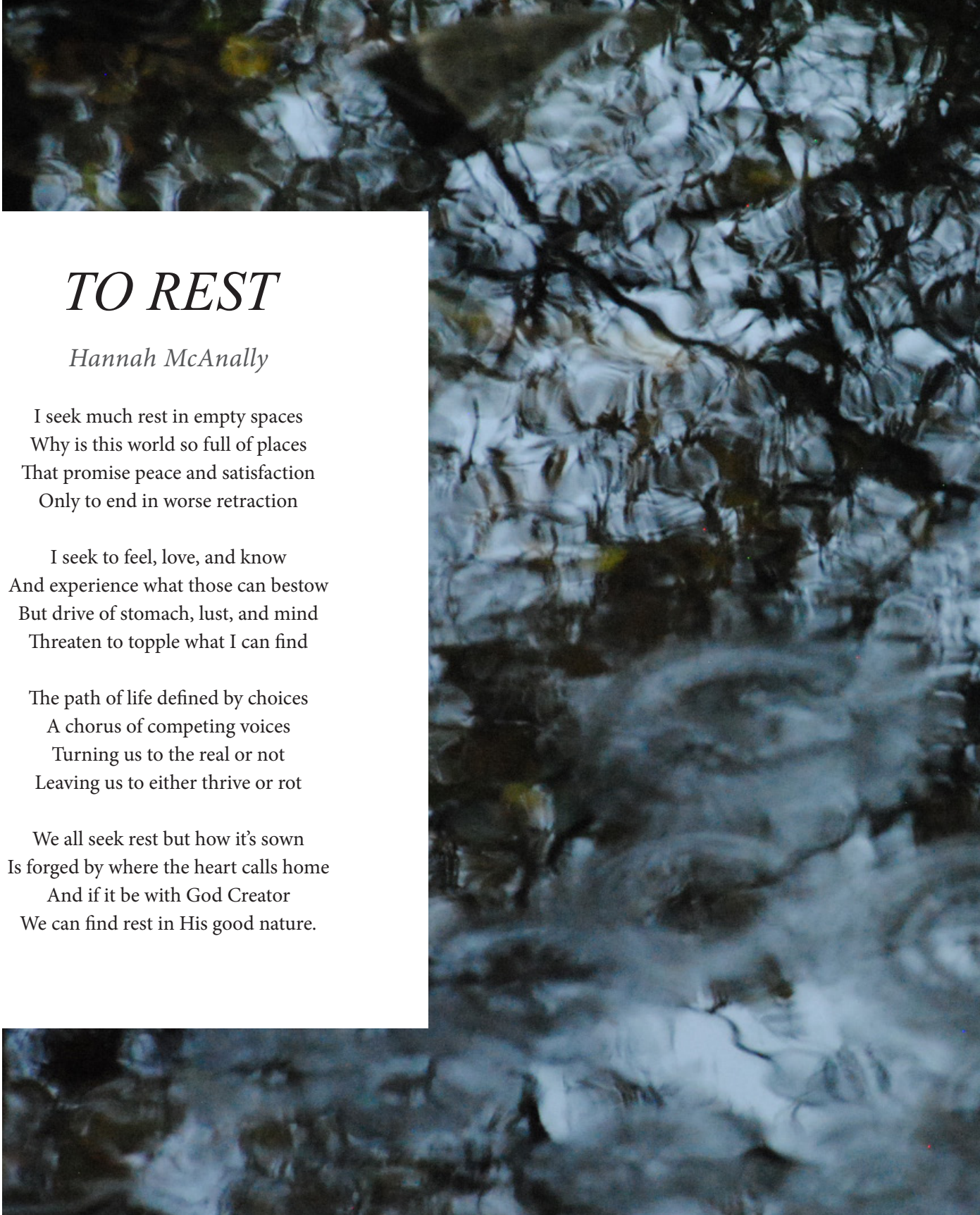
"Industry!" P.W. cries with indignation. "How can a body toil, sell, enjoy the idea of blessings and fruit, hate money, strive to give, and accept charity all at once? I have followed your word, and I have been spurned by those that gave to me, by those that I fed, and by those I strove to clothe and feed in turn!"

The scarecrow smiles.

Thice's eyes rapidly move over the gilded stacks on every surface, catch the scent of rotting fruit mulled by rain; he decides in an instant to flee and find the Author of the townspeople's book.

One door slam and ten minutes of storm later, Thice finds himself without the walls of the alabaster city, gazing upon his small cabin on the outskirts. Thice's sunburned scalp could predict that the prodigal sun would soon return, bleaching the walls a more painful shade of white, baffling the wealthy citizens forced to receive it.





TO REST

Hannah McAnally

I seek much rest in empty spaces
Why is this world so full of places
That promise peace and satisfaction
Only to end in worse retraction

I seek to feel, love, and know
And experience what those can bestow
But drive of stomach, lust, and mind
Threaten to topple what I can find

The path of life defined by choices
A chorus of competing voices
Turning us to the real or not
Leaving us to either thrive or rot

We all seek rest but how it's sown
Is forged by where the heart calls home
And if it be with God Creator
We can find rest in His good nature.





BAKE SALE FOR WORLD HUNGER

Molly Tompkins

We first made contact with the woman after the Bake Sale for World Hunger. There was a fair turnout at our stand. All of Susan's scones sold, and the confetti cookies. A tupperware of brownies got left over but that's because Sam ignored the sign-up sheet and brought duplicates. Only Max's treats were totally gone; the neighborhood adults were so impressed that a boy had really made chocolate chip cookies by himself. Most of my lemon cookies were left, their shiny shells sweating in the sun. The gang could have just eaten the cookies as we folded up our hand-painted sign, but Ruth and Timothy put their allowance coins in the glass jar so that I could feel like I was part of the cause.

The woman sat in the vacant lot above the creek, six houses down from ours. We passed by her every day, but it felt wrong to march past with my mostly-full box of unwanted cookies. Our neighborhood had never had a homeless person. They got disappeared. So to us, she seemed rare, her cracked heels and foggy eyes prophetic, like she'd chosen our empty lot. We laid down a cookie between her feet. I assumed she would snatch it—we'd never seen her eat—but it lay there like a bright yellow coin in the brown grass. At first I was impressed, then offended. I pulled out another cookie, crinkling the parchment, and smacked it loudly. "It's not bad," I said.

"It was the best out of everything," Ruth said.

"Can I have one?" asked Thomas.

Soon, everyone was eating the cookies over the woman, but she just nodded at the sky with a faint smile on her face.

That night at the dinner table, we told about our days. Thomas gave me a warning look, but usually Daddy made me feel better when the other kids were mean. So I told him about how the woman didn't eat my cookie.

"You think bread just appears on the table?" He straightened his suit sleeve, the same faded, pillowed navy of airplane seats. "Who bought the ingredients for those cookies?"

"Mom?" I guessed. She had taken me to the store to get the ingredients, and paid for them, but she shook her head at me.

"I go to work every day to get food for you, not for some lady on the street who doesn't want it."

"But she does want it, I know she does."

"If you don't want the food I bring home, I'm happy to retire." He sat back on the wooden chair. My mom shoved the green beans out of his elbow's path. "I don't particularly like working all day. But at least I do it. Because if you want to eat, you have to work." His liquid anger hardened into solid lines on his face. He leaned towards Thomas. "That's the truth of life." Thomas nodded. "Remember that."

The next day, the gang threw strips of bread at the woman from paper sacks on their way to feed the ducks at the pond. Technically, the pond belonged to the suburban mansion at the bottom of the neighborhood, but they didn't keep fences, so we considered it public. A crust hit the woman on the ear and I told the others to stop it.

"She's probably hungry," whined Thomas.

"We're doing a good thing, said Timothy.

"It's not nice." I pulled the bag out of my older brother's hand. Tim began to suck on a strip of bread.

By the time the storm was forecast, we were friends with her. We'd realized she didn't have teeth, and she probably didn't want to gum the cookie in front of us. She never talked, but she nodded in our directions and squeezed our hands. She had blue tattoos, planets and stars and constellations, dripping off her arms. You had to spread them out between your hands like dough to read them straight. "You're like a treasure map," Danny had told her. She used to tell us what would happen to us. Once we held her arm up to the stars with a flashlight, trying to match the pattern.

That day, the last dry day, we took her an umbrella. It felt worse than doing nothing at all but we didn't live in a place where you took homeless people inside, they were supposed to go to the better place that none of us had seen, but some of the kids who went with their mothers to volunteer there said it was a huge storeroom full of bins of toothpaste, tissues, mittens, and infinite racks of hanging clothes like a department store for the poor. She wouldn't open the umbrella so we did it for her and propped it between her legs so it leaned on her neck like a vine and stuck out over her head.

In the days before the rain, I stayed inside except to deliver the umbrella. The sky looked like someone had skinned a sheep and laid the fleece over the sun. I hovered near the lamps and the aura of the TV screen. The coins in our jar turned dull. I hated not being able to see the sky. Our planet could be tumbling through the solar system, and we wouldn't know. If we died now, it would last forever.

When the rain began, we met at the top of the neighborhood. The sidewalk chalk wound in oozing streams that ran together and overlapped like sinews. We painted patterns on each other with mud. Ben held a frog until we said he'd get warts, and then he threw it at Natalie so she fell back and splashed up water. We could go down in the drain now, the one under the bridge, because the water would pick up the snakes that usually lived in there and drag them out. They let us go play when it rained, like suddenly there were no kidnappers or guns or homework. It was like a snow day, but it probably came about twice more a year.

I'd never seen a worm since I was eight, but now they came pouring out, laying dark like cracks in the sidewalk. I bent over one and watched it scrunch itself in and out like an accordion. I squished my shoulders and scrunched my butt and sucked in, hoping to grow taller when I released the air. Ben pushed me from behind and I tripped and had to high knee over the worms not to explode them. That reminded me.

"We should cut it!"

"Huh?"

"You know." I knelt beside the worm. "If you cut it, it'll grow into two worms."

“What if you’re wrong?” He flicked out his pocket knife and waggled the tip in my belly button. “It’s a science fact.” I wanted to see the miracle of the worm healing itself and chugging away reborn.

“She wouldn’t know.” Thomas appeared behind me. “She’s just a girl.”

“Charlie told me it would work.” I wished Charlie were here. He’d trained the cat that shared the vacant lot with the woman by setting out saucers of milk. When she had babies, he’d taken them and grewed them up to be nice, indoor cats.

When Ben heard Charlie’s name, he shrugged and squatted by the worm. “Here goes nothing,” he said.

His knife came down perfectly in one of the grooves. I thought the worm would be like jelly, but I heard a splintering sound. The worm writhed, but Ben pressed down with both hands. When Ben finished, one half of it thrashed into the air, pounding itself on the sidewalk and twirling like a ballet ribbon. The other began to creep forward. Behind it flamed a dark trail of blood that the rain quickly thinned and swept in a wave under my sneakers. While the bleeding stump dragged itself back the way it had come, returning to the mud, its tail continued to beat itself against the pavement.

“Why isn’t it working?” I was crying but I hoped Ben wouldn’t tell because we were both soaking wet. The clouds were thickening from silver to black. The silver thing stilled and a rose colored halo hovered around it in the puddle. I wanted to throw up. “Charlie said it would work, I swear. I thought it would heal, and, and I thought we would make a new one.”

“The tail part doesn’t have the heart or the brains, dummy,” said Ben. “It couldn’t grow those.”

“It’s just a worm.” Thomas pulled me under his arm and steered me towards the rest of the gang at the creekbed.

The creek was high and black, catching the sun like molten metal. Our faces reflected silver and black, blurred and stretched by the currents that carried milk cartons and plastic water bottles downstream, filling with water to drown briefly before resurfacing and buffeting over and against one another.

On the fifteenth day of the storm, we looked out the window to see the woman riding upside down on our umbrella like Aladdin on his carpet or a witch on a broom.



When the storm ended the town went to pick up the trash. It had all swept to the end of the river in a giant junk heap, a silver lining—the adults said—for the cleanup crew. But when everyone arrived at the heap, a pile too tall for us to climb, a monument the size of the New York Christmas Tree on TV, everyone just rolled a bottle with their toe or tugged an orange sweatshirt streaked with dirt and crushed leaves. Tommy tried to climb it, but the pile sucked him in. We had to pull him out with the skeleton of a bicycle wheel. There was nowhere else for it to go, really. Even if we took it to the landfill, it was too much to burn. They decided to leave it as a monument. To remember the storm by.

“She should’ve gone to the place,” I said.

“Heavenly Days.” Charlie looked at the sky and crossed himself crooked. None of us was Catholic.

“No. The shelter.”

“That’s the name.” He crumpled the water bottle in his fist. When he held it out, though, the creases rounded, the neck untwisted with a snap as if something were breathing life into it. I yelped.

Dad came up and touched the tear on my cheek. “What’s wrong?”

“There’s so much trash.” I hiccuped.

“I know.” He looked both glumly and wistfully up at the pile. “It’ll outlive us all.”



A MONK OF DREAMS: A FENLANDS FABLE

Hannah Legatowicz

All stories begin with inconvenience. The farmlands, teeming with dew dropped rye and barely, quaintly grew beside the marshy rivulets; the Walpole family had been in the Fenlands since the first wall and pole were built. Little Henry Walpole, or Hen for short, began to notice the marshes retreating towards the faraway shore. No more skipping stones or catching insects or mud pies or rafting—this was a deep inconvenience for Little Hen. He decided to find the murderer of his beloved rivulets.

Before Hen even stepped upon the thoroughfare, he could see trails of black smoke and hear the clamor of men at work. As he approached, he suddenly witnessed a proud man, draped in a luxurious indigo cape lined with snow white fur. Clustered around him were men clad in armor.

“Men, shall we move onwards?”

“Aye Sir!”

“And bring the marsh to her end?”

“Aye Sir, the end!”

“And remove the impurities from the land?”

“Aye Sir, for the advantage of the commonwealth!”

“Then let us resume our upheaval of beastly Nature and her woes!”

“Huzzah!”

Swiftly, the men resumed their march across the marshes, evidently drained and stampeded. Little Hen found himself in the deep entrails of the rivulets, the emptied channels now bulleted by the men’s footsteps; a crushed poppy appeared from under the clot of mud: uprooted, dismembered, a broken image of what it once was. Hen’s hand plucked up the flower’s remains, which were beyond repair or even examination; yet the crimson petals still maintained their brilliance.

“Hallo!”

Hen heard a distant shout. He turned to see a man approaching him.

“Hallo!” Hen replied.

“Did you see ‘em, kid?”

“Who? The men in armor?”

“Aye and look at what they’ve done.” He paused and looked up at the desolate sea of mud.

“What for?”

“The Earl of Bedford’s order, that’s what for. He commissioned these men from Cromwell’s army,” He paused, sarcastically noting, “So that we may benefit the industry of the republic.”

“What was wrong with our industry before?”

“We hadn’t formalized it, the marsh don’t bode well with regulations. But that’s all over now. Our fine marshes are being gutted and drained.”

“No! Is there nothing we can do?”

“Don’t despair, lad! A lot of us come now to stop the Earl and his men. We call ourselves the Fen Tigers—we will stop at nothing to defend our Fenlands!” As soon as he expressed his last remark, Hen heard dozens of men chanting, armored in mud and armed with scythes.

“Join us!”

“But where are you all going?”

“Didn’t you hear me chap—to stop the Earl and his men!” The Tigers began to notice Little Hen and his questioning.

“Huzzah! Join us and defend our moors, our crop, our homeland!”

“Aye Sir, I will.”

And off went Hen, with the Fen Tigers, traversing through the wasteland.

Hen had never fought before. A sheepish doubt chipped at his heart, which pumped with no rhythm of a tiger’s pounce. However, the Tigers began to chant and sing, reminding Hen that not all hope is lost—and, according to their song, what is lost can be regained here on earth.

“Good sir,” Hen peeped, turning towards the man he first spoke with, Rebel Joe. “Surely the Fenlands are not the only hamlets being fashioned in manner of industry?”

“Aye, young fellow, aye indeed.”

“Are we all alone, then?”

“Aye, we are the last of us. Elsewhere they live as if wound like a clock, and they make these funny little machines, which seem to make a great deal out of them too; they must worship a different god. We’ll be like them monks, alone in all the world, waiting to be plucked.”

“Monks?”

“Aye, lad, monks like them marshes.”

“I’ve never seen any monasteries.”

“Aye, they intended that much. They sayest they practice a holy life; nay, they fled the world cause they’re frightened.”

“I cannot blame them. Pray, perhaps they know something we don’t. Where can I find them?”
“Doubtful.” Rebel Joe paused. “Eh, I doubt he’s still alive— but I heard of a monk, they called him the *Monk of Dreams* because he sleeps so much. Many great princes and poets have visited him; they return as if in dreams awake.”

Before Hen could inquire into this strange Monk of Dreams, the Tigers began to shout. Monolithic engines became visible from within the fog; at once, the Tigers hacked and dismembered them. Yelling ensued; Cromwell’s iron brigade threatened their muskets and soon the two forces were scrimmaging recklessly in the sullen glade.

Little Hen, afraid and distracted by visions of cities and God, turned upon his heel and started on the blemished highway.

Reader, forgive me for neglecting the natural limitations of time and place, which are most pressing upon our lives. It seems our hero, Little Hen, is a sprite or changeling, but I protest, he is only a boy. And because of that, he began to grow frail from traveling. Upon descending a hill, Hen soon looked out upon a vast metropolis, festooned with ribbons of smoke and spindles of steel. In our weaknesses, even the wasteland appears prosperous.

The *World’s City*, as it came to be called, compelled Hen to enter through the adamantine gates, whose radiance rendered the moors hideous. The basaltic masonry induced a chill upon Hen’s brow, though luckily, he was blasted by the fiery breath of two great furnaces flanking the foyer. The city’s inhabitants were unlike anything Hen had ever seen. It was not due to their general outlandishness—in fact, there was nothing general about them. All were distinguished and alien from one another, as if each man were an island.

Many city folks wore garish colors in geometric cuts; some rejected such extravagance and wore linen sacks; while others dressed in fabric as light as feathers, or clad themselves in political slogans, or wore what they hated as a form of protest, though many changed their style every day, as if blank-slates. It was not just a matter of dress, but the tools these people used, which often overtook and distracted them; though the tools varied, they each promised convenience, and so the city was vast and autonomous. In fact, these people became tools themselves.

As Hen amused himself by observing these strange individuals, a peculiar beam flashed upon his eyes, beckoning him to follow suit. He came upon a man wearing nothing but mirrors and a globular lamp sitting upon his crown.

“Hullo!”

The strange man said nothing.

“Hullo, sir!”

Confused, Hen stood right beneath the man’s chin, catching a glimpse of his reflection, shouting:

“You!”

“Fiddlesticks!” The mirrored man cried, paused, and contemptuously examined the boy.

“Who are you and what are you doing?” Hen inquired.

“You are not from here.”

“Aye, but how did you know? There must be millions of people here.”

“Because nobody asks questions.”

“Why?”

“Ha—how silly! Why, you ask? Because why should it matter what other people do or why things are the way they are? It takes one away from themselves— which ought to be avoided.”

“Why should I only be concerned with myself?”

“Because the self is limitless, infinite. Our self-progress constitutes our technique, which results in the benefit of the World.”

Upon hearing this, Hen was indomitably perplexed.

“But why benefit the world if you are only to see to yourself?”

“I am the World.”

And without proper farewell, the mirrored man walked away, casting Hen in a series of fragmented reflections.

Hen wandered through the city, which seemed to have no end, in hopes to find rest, but to no avail. Besides, he felt terribly lonely in this place.

Wishing to leave the World’s City, Hen returned to city’s gates; but this time, a cloaked figure barred Hen from leaving.

“Good evening, please excuse me.” Hen politely chirped.

“If you wish to leave the World, you must first answer me this,” the raspy voice replied, “What is out there that is not already in here?”

“It seems you have everything in this city, but there is something the moors have that this place does not, but I cannot name it...” Hen thought long and hard, “Aha! That’s it—this place lacks the things which cannot be named!”

The cloaked figure vanished, and Hen fled from the city, which came to be called the *World*.

Hen traveled by moonlight; nearly crushed by the weight of exhaustion, he caught the glow of poppies, numberless, in a vast meadow. He found a nice cluster and fell asleep.

“Hail!”

Hen awoke to a kind voice and the morning light. He saw an old man, wearing a simple white habit.

“Hullo! Are you a monk?”

“Indeed, little one.” The monk replied, sitting next to Hen, “But tell me, what brings you here all by yourself?”

"I am looking for the Monk of Dreams."

The monk chuckled, "I forgot that was what they once called me."

"Why did they?"

"I suppose I have always been fond of naps, which have induced many a dream." The monk stood up, with a wistful smile, "Follow me."

So, Hen followed the monk across the field of poppies. They soon arrived at a quaint monastery, entwined with curls of ivy, perched upon the seaside. They entered through a galley way, and sat underneath an arch, looking out toward the seemingly infinite horizon.

"You say you have been searching for me?" The monk finally asked.

"Aye, I was told you might know why the world as we know it is vanishing."

"I see. It's odd, people have been wanting to know that since Adam and Eve first ate of the forbidden fruit."

"Nay, this is an entirely new matter. Our land is being drained; my people are being uprooted; mankind has become tools of a monstrous machine; and there is *nothing* I, or anyone, can do about it."

The monk remained quiet for a long time.

"You are right; there is nothing you or I, or anyone, can do about it."

Hen looked puzzled.

"But we need not fret over what has already been taken care of." The monk continued.

"Taken care of? The world is ending!"

"Don't you see, the world of man was always doomed to end."

"Then all is for naught! All is *hopeless*!"

"Nay, you misunderstand. The world calls me and my brothers and my sisters mad; they say we sleep and take our dreams for reality; that our doctrine is opium; our faith mere childish nonsense. But the world misunderstands. Do you not see how plentiful these poppies grow, despite the marsh? Or even how earnest the moors adorn God's creation despite their wildness? Or how the sun remains despite the storm? Do not conflate the particulars with the infinite—for if you do, then you are right to say that all is hopeless."

"But sorrow and fear flood my soul, and I forget what is truly infinite. How shall I always remember that the sun remains despite the storm?"

Before the monk could reply, the dense fog that hung over the sea began to dissolve, embalmed by the glow of the sun, which, for only a moment, revealed a perfect beam, forever unbroken, even by the likes of mankind.

Cheers to inconvenience—so that we may find God's infinity in our infirmity.

The end.



I WAS WALKING DOWN A PATH

Caroline Brown

I was walking one day down a path
That was straight and unbent and true.
Buildings and cranes rose above my head like trees
But I had no thought, I hadn't met you.

On that path long and clear, I ran into another,
Who stopped and stared and smiled.
I slowed my steps, then continued as I had
Left with an impression of a love that was mild.

I reached a curve in the way that made my steps falter,
I looked and turned and thought
But followed it ploddingly under a row of windows
And around a corner until I caught

Sight of a face I swore I knew, and eyes that
Glittered and laughed and danced
So that I could not help but join in
And we continued down that path laid out by chance.

The longer we walked, the closer we pulled
Like a leaf in an eddy, a foot sunk in mud, a moth in a flame,
And as night fell, I found myself
On a strange path with a strange name.





My light had gone out, the path had forked, but you were there,
Straight and unbent and true.
But I prayed for rain to come because I had not
The strength to leave you.

The clouds opened up, and the moon was obscured, and the sky
Rolled and rumbled and shook
And sheets of water loosed from heaven
And one last look at you, I took

You looked at me, and I saw your eyes
Dim and fade and blink
One step back, and the rain hid you.
I reached out, and I felt myself sink.

Alone in the downpour, a warm light fell on me
I looked around and up, and there
A street light had been lit, and under it
A straight path was visible in the watery air.

I was walking one night
Tired alone and wet
But now the path is straight again
I may reach my destination on time yet.

WHERE HAS ALL THE TIME GONE?

Braxton Bullock

It is an unusually chilly and windy morning in East Texas due to the cold front that passed in the night before. Young Oliver is grudgingly putting on his boots and his lined coat. Before making the effort to put on the second boot, Oliver makes one final plea with his father to stay home instead of visiting Grandpa Kent, but his father insists on the family making this outing because Grandpa Kent had been down and lonely ever since moving into the nursing home, after becoming unable to care for himself.

Grandpa Kent was quite old when Oliver, now thirteen years old himself, was born. Because of his age and fragility, especially following his hospitalization a few years ago, Grandpa Kent has been unable to perform typical grandfather-grandson activities for most of Oliver's memorable life. Oliver knew he ought to care more than he did, and that thought made him uncomfortable. So he tried not to think much about his grandfather at all.

In spite of Oliver's protests, the family arrived at the nursing home. Oliver opens the door to the car and immediately feels the dreaded wind chill. He looks around the parking lot, which is about a tenth full with vehicles at this time and the line markers are in need of a repaint. They walked together to the front entrance and entered the facility. The lobby area looks unexciting and dreary, with dull lighting, low ceilings, worn white tiled floors, and an unpleasant smell. The room has a nursing station and two televisions. One of the televisions is playing a rerun of Dr. Phil, which

has been long discontinued, and the other is playing local news. Several residents are hovering near the televisions.

Oliver and his parents then walked down a hallway and reached Grandpa Kent's room. The door is half open when they get there, and they then enter and greet him. It takes him a moment to register who has entered, but once he does, he is illuminated with joy to see them all. His room is about the size of a hospital room, maybe a tad smaller. There is a window with open blinds and a view to the front courtyard area and entrance. The bed is backed into the right corner of the room and a small television is a few feet beyond the base of the bed on top of a dresser. Various memorabilia belonging to Grandpa Kent sit on the dresser and adjacent table, including family pictures, small cutesy crayon drawings by his grandchildren and great grandchildren, an old leather-bound Bible with gilded edges, and a couple birthday cards from his recent ninety-sixth birthday party.

Oliver goes over to the bed, where his grandfather is confined nearly all day, and hugs him. His parents then began to converse with Grandpa Kent. Oliver occasionally butted in or answered a question asked by his grandfather, but within a few minutes he was sitting in a chair across from the bed and half-scrolling on his smart phone and half-listening to the conversation. It is about noon and Grandpa Kent asks Oliver's parents to go to a nearby restaurant and buy a meal for him. The nursing home cafeteria food is fine, but an outside meal is always cherished. They understand, and as they are preparing to leave, Grandpa Kent requests Oliver to stay behind with him. At first, Oliver is reluctant to stay since he worries it could be awkward, but he is in no position to do otherwise and he knows his grandfather must want to visit with him. So once his parents exit, Oliver takes his chair and pushes it closer to the bed so Grandpa Kent will be able to hear what he is saying more clearly.

When he sits down, he notices that Grandpa Kent has his head turned and is looking out the window. Rain is beginning to fall and the drops are tapping against the windowpane. Grandpa Kent then turns his head towards Oliver, and a tear runs down his wrinkled cheek. Oliver's face immediately expresses concern, and right before he asks his grandfather if he needs a nurse, Grandpa Kent grabs Oliver's hand and tells him everything is okay. "I just want to tell you a story," Grandpa Kent says with a shaky yet assured voice. "Many years ago I was visiting my own mother at a nursing home just like you are visiting me. She was very old just like I am now." He continued, "Once when I was preparing her breakfast, I noticed she was staring out her window." Grandpa Kent paused for a moment, and then said with a quiver, "she looked back at me and she said 'Kent, where has all the time gone?'" He could no longer restrain his tears, and Oliver, bewildered by the situation, helped get him a tissue. Oliver notices his grandfather is smiling but his hand is still shaking, and he is staring off to the side. Oliver looks in the direction of his stare and sees a clock on the wall ticking away slowly but surely. He then holds his grandfather's hand to comfort him. "I didn't understand what she meant then. Now I do," Grandpa Kent said finally. Soon after, Oliver's parents return, Grandpa Kent enjoys his lunch, and they begin to part ways. Before they leave, Grandpa Kent decides to give the old Bible sitting on the table to Oliver as a gift. Oliver thanks him and hugs him before walking out.

During the drive home, the rain storm worsens and the sound of the rain pouring combined with the windshield wipers makes it hard to even talk in the car, but this does not stop Oliver from thinking about the wisdom his grandfather relayed to him. He wonders how such an old man could say life had been so short. His reflections made him feel guilty for initially not wanting to visit the nursing home and for all the times he chose trivial things over visiting his grandfather in the past. When they arrived home, Oliver took the Bible his grandfather had gifted him and gently placed it onto his nightstand. Then he noticed a small piece of white notebook paper barely poking out of the bottom portion of the book, only seeing it due to the contrast of the white with the golden edges. He opens to the marked page, which was the end of Ecclesiastes. His eyes immediately focus on one bit of text that had been underlined with a pencil, and he reads:

Fear God, and keep His commandments:

For this is the whole duty of man.

For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

Then Oliver realized that everything was quiet. The storm had passed. He walked outside the house and saw the weather was calm, the sun was beginning to peek out from the clouds, and the breeze was warm. He looked behind him at his front door and saw his father sagging against the doorframe, with tears running down his face and a phone held to his ear.

Before his father could speak, Oliver understood.



RAIN AND MEMORY

Hugh Nicholson

“I hear the drizzle of the rain

Like a memory it falls

Soft and warm continuing

Tapping on my roof and walls,”

writes Paul Simon in the opening lines of *Kathy's Song*, in which the speaker's observation of the rain leads him to lament his first and now former love. One of the more interesting ventures Paul Simon takes in these lines is to associate rain with memory. It's a bold idea, but if you think about it, this association might not be that uncommon. After all, doesn't it seem as if the critical, or we might even say most memorable, scenes in movies are so often punctuated by a setting of pouring rain? There's a classic image of the dramatic moment being depicted amidst heavy rain, be it a tragic death, the tooth-and-nail denouement of an action sequence, or a long-forecasted confession of love. I can think of examples, too, in my own life in which it seemed fitting that a memorable moment was punctuated by downpour. On the evening right after my high school graduation – the cusp of independent adulthood – it rained completely irresponsibly, a straight, unhindered dumping of water. It was a joyous time; that night I remember watching the bulbous drops of rain on the window of the car slowly descending into oblivion as we drove home from the graduation ceremony, and thinking about how I wished that I could preserve that moment, and that the happiness that I felt would remain. Amidst a much gloomier context, Paul Simon offers a similar impression on the individual drops of rain in the last lines of *Kathy's Song*:

And as I watch the drops of rain

Weave their weary paths and die

I know that I am like the rain

There but for the grace of you go I.

“Weave their weary paths and die” — could it be that our association of rain with memory has something to do with the fleetingness of raindrops? Perhaps this is where the sadness comes from, too, in that we recognize that particular moments which we wish we could save — though they may continue to have an effect on us, just as water does on soil — will nonetheless be inaccessible to us afterward. We will be unable to physically see and experience them as we once did.

Now, you might find this way of encapsulating things beautiful. But, if you’re like me, in addition to beautiful, you’ll also find it somewhat bothersome. Bothersome because what this means is that much of your life is controlled by these brief, rain-like events, over which you can no longer exercise any power once they occur. Consider plotting all your memories on a graph with “life-altering effect” on the y-axis, and time at which they occurred on the x-axis. The resulting curve of “life altering affect versus time” would appear a pretty much flat line at a low value over most of the time — most of the events you can remember didn’t change your life — but, here and there, occurring almost randomly, would be these tall, very thin spikes — the events that did change your life. This, by the way, is also how a graph of ‘hourly liquid precipitation’ versus time will look — if you widen the scope to a whole month or even a year. Now, apart from bothersome, you might even call this *unjust*. Why should most of your life be determined by these brief jumps into a realm not comparable to normal life? Most of the time you’re not even aware that something’s going to become a life-changing event while it’s happening, so you don’t know to act as if it were. It’s as if your life were a feudal aristocracy in which a few aloof memories lord it over the majority of common life-happenings. Shouldn’t this sort of society warrant rebellion? In the air of Thomas Paine, “small should not rule large.”

As one who professes faith in Christ, one of the problems I’ve encountered is that much of what inspires my faith seems to come from brief, abnormal events in which I’ve been moved by something or felt that God was active in the things that occurred. On the other hand, to put it in perspective, most of the time I’m not even thinking about God and don’t really want to be disrupted by having to do so, either. How, I’ve wondered, do I reconcile these two states of my supposed faith? I can imagine that those who give up on the idea of Christianity entirely might describe this sort of problem as part of what urged them towards that decision. Someone might plead to them, “But didn’t you say that you had that experience where you felt like God was with you?” And they might reply, “Yes— but that was just that one moment; I haven’t felt that way ever again, and I don’t think I ever will.”

At the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*, a group of elementary-school-aged boys make-up their quarrels with a certain boy among them when they learn that he is dying of pneumonia. This reconciliation occurs to the point that, with it, Dostoyevsky is able to construct, I think, the exact sort of memory-forming moment to which someone might attribute their faith in God, accompanied by the sudden proliferation of things like kindness, forgiveness, hope, joy, which we would associate with Christian ethics. Following the boy's funeral, the young man who is the protagonist of the novel, Alyosha, assembles these boys at a place out in the fields beyond the town where there is a prominent, lone stone set in the ground. Here, Alyosha gives the boys a speech very-much focused on memory. He begins, saying,

“Even though we may be occupied with the most important matters, attain honours or fall into some great misfortune — all the same let us never forget how good we found it here, all of us in association, united by such good and happy feeling, which for this time of our love for the poor boy has possibly made us better than we are in actual fact.”

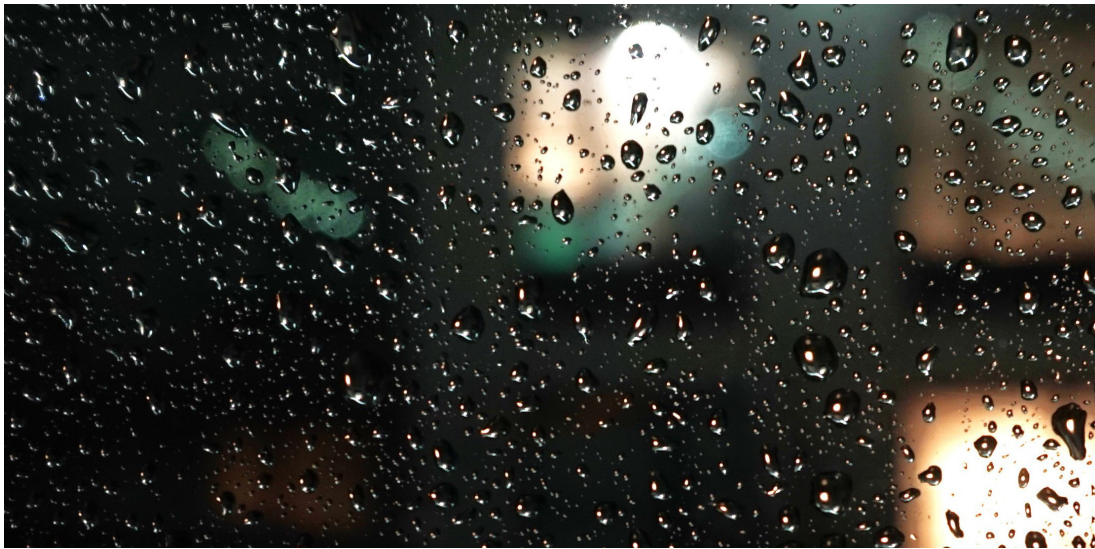
Oddly, though it seems he is aware of its fleetingness, what Alyosha says next praises this event not as a present reality, but as a future memory within these boys' minds. Our hero declares:

“Much is said to you about your education, but a beautiful, sacred memory like that, one preserved from childhood, is possibly the very best education of all... If he gathers many such memories in his life, a man is saved from it all... And even if only one good memory remains within our hearts, then even it may serve some day for our salvation. It may be that we shall later even grow wicked... but perhaps this very memory alone will keep [us] from a great evil, and [we] will have second thoughts, and say: ‘Yes, I was good that day, bold and honest.’”

It seems as though, to Dostoyevsky, fleetingness is not such a bad thing after all. In fact, the very tragic nature of the moment — that it will become only memory in the boy's minds and not equal up to what most of their lives will be like — actually gives the moment the power to continue. Though the boys may never be able to reach such a point again, the memory of it will nonetheless define their lives in hindsight. As it turns out, the fate of the droplets of rain is rather similar. We know that, though they disappear into the ground and, in a sense, die, they afterwards continue to affect the soil, to the benefit of plants and other organisms, and also eventually the rock beneath, becoming part of the water cycle, which is such an essential feature of our planet.

Apart from droplets of rain, though, there is another, perhaps more obvious object that can be used metaphorically to convey this idea. A seed, which seems to disappear when it falls into the ground, later gives rise to a plant, and, not only that, determines what kind of plant grows from it. If you've read it, you may have wondered throughout most of the story why Dostoyevsky opens the novel with this verse from the gospel of John. In it, Jesus's words are "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Perhaps Dostoyevsky was thinking of the end of the book when he placed this quote at its beginning.

Like me, you might have felt like the Christian narrative is one which asks you to live a life in which you're always way above normal on the "life-altering effect versus time" graph. And of course you'd say, "well, I don't have the energy for that." But what Dostoyevsky, who likely thought longer about it than a lot of us have, might be saying is that you don't have to; God knows that we have little control over these brief moments that shape us. Rather, he has ways of using them for our redemption. Not far from death, the novelist might be considering a gospel which is more truly 'outside of time' — as we are told is the nature of God. One in which a single bright moment in a dark life might, regardless of what point in time it may have occupied, at whatever final judgment there may be, bring the person to repentance and to choose the side of loving God. Thus, if you have such a memory, which I think many of us do, I would urge you to cling to it, and, in this case, allow the large to be ruled by the small.



A night photograph of a street scene. In the foreground, a dark, wet surface, likely a road or sidewalk, reflects the warm, yellow light of streetlights. The reflection is slightly blurred, creating a sense of movement or a long exposure. In the background, dark silhouettes of trees and bushes frame the scene. A few streetlights are visible, casting a soft glow. The overall mood is quiet and contemplative.

UNSTIRRED

Karis Chiao

fallen formed puddle 'pon the floor;
still & stagnant, yet yearning for more—
a living water pulled from well,
a faith to shout and faith to tell.

no shallow splash from up the ground—
not a ripple, not a sound—
unmoving pool, never changing;
a life left to no rearranging.

A TRICK OF THE LIGHT

Analise Pickerrell

I leaned over the guardrails on the cliffside, peering over the deep ravine formed by the Yellowstone River. Farther up the river, the glistening waters of Yellowstone Falls cascaded down the tawny rockface dotted by patches of lush green and pine trees.

Through the mist emanating from the falls, a faint rainbow appeared. I lifted my camera, anxious to capture the rare moment, and snapped the photo. I pulled the camera away from my face, and it was gone.

I continued walking the trail. A hurried man strapped with expensive camera equipment stopped and asked us a question. Did you see the rainbow?

I did a way back, I said. He said it was supposed to appear around nine in the morning. I guess I had gotten lucky. If you go that way now, you might catch it, I told him. A few hours later, I ran into him again. He had missed it.

Who knew how long he had been preparing for that moment? The day had been sunny and clear – not a cloud in the sky. The conditions were perfect. He knew where to be and when. But when the time came, the rare sight evaded him.

The last time I remember the rainbow being mentioned was in Sunday School. Over coloring pages and kid-friendly Bibles, we learned about the great flood and the beautiful rainbow that God bestowed upon Noah and his family after they had been stranded on an earth-encompassing ocean for over a year. In Genesis, God said, “I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

After the fall, the Noahic Covenant is the first promise God made to humanity. It stands uniquely in principle: while most of God’s Old Testament promises are inextricably tied to the coming Christ or eternal salvation, the rainbow is simply God’s promise that he won’t wipe out humankind by way of water – a sign of God’s mercy on Noah and his grace in allowing us life when we should all have been drowned on account of our wickedness. For now, judgment is suspended. The rainbow means we have hope, clemency, a fresh start.

And thousands of years after the fact, rainbows occasionally bend across our skies, and other than offering a pleasing sight, remind us of a hopeful promise of days gone by. And as we’re taught in elementary school science, certain conditions need to combine for a rainbow to occur, namely, light and water. But typically, the latter component is only supplied during a storm. I wonder if the clouds graciously allowed a beam of light to break through the storm at Camp Mystic, and the girls were able to see the brilliant colors before being swallowed by floodwaters.

I wonder if the children hiding under their desks behind a locked door, look down at their multicolored pack of crayons and think of better things as shots ring in the distance. I wonder if the civilians starving in Gaza had looked at the rubble that was once a sprawling urban landscape and missed the days that were full of color.

Why would God choose rainbows to symbolize his promises? The rainbow: a fleeting image, a trick of the light, a mirage. Intangible beauty. So fleeting, you can almost convince yourself that you didn’t see it. That it had meant nothing. That you created beauty out of suffering simply to cope with the storms of this world.

I remember being a kid and biking down a neighborhood street, luminescent and slick from a passing storm. I would look up, and to my great astonishment, a colorful arch appeared across the overcast sky. I would speed up, turning the pedals on my bike until they started automatically flipping over in hurried successions. If I could just get closer to this beautiful sight, it would become more real, I thought. But before I could reach it, the vibrant hues faded back into dreary grey.

Were God's promises like that? Were they apparent in short moments, and gone the next? Were they nothing more than a rapid blip of color in a long, stormy day? Why couldn't He have used something more reliable to symbolize his promise, like a sturdy Colorado mountain or a thousand-year-old California Sequoia?

It's no wonder people lose hope in God's promises, especially when the storms and suffering of this world feel much more real than the fleeting phenomena of a rainbow. When I walk down the street, passing the rainbow flags posted outside of cafes, bookstores, universities, and churches, I wonder how God allowed a symbol of his mercy and kindness to become a symbol glorifying self, lust, and the rejection of the sacred. The world must have lost hope in God's promises and, in turn, created its own.

But the early followers of Christ didn't claim the rainbow as a symbol of God's promises. They claimed the tree, the torture device used to humiliate the only perfect man who ever existed. They chose the cross – the icon of a God who didn't merely watch us suffer, but suffered with us.

Aside from the Noahic covenant, God makes thousands of promises in the Bible. One of these is suffering. "In the world, you will have tribulation," Christ says. "But take heart; I have overcome the world." God's promises to us – of hope, peace, and steadfast love – aren't suspended when we experience intense, and often devastating, suffering. Rather, his promises help us suffer well. In his letter to the church of Phillipi, Paul the Apostle wrote that he could "do all things through Christ who strengthens." He didn't say that Christ delivered him from pain. Rather, he allowed him to be content within it. He understood how "both to abound and to suffer need."

In the midst of a storm, our perspective is encompassed and obscured by the circumstances around us: the torrential downpour, the lightning flashes, the ear-splitting thunder. But all it takes is a small beam of light breaking through the clouds for the whole spectrum of color to be revealed. When sunlight enters through droplets of water, typically from rain, the droplets refract the light. They make our eyes perceive something that wasn't perceptible before, just as God's promises give meaning to our suffering. And like rainbows only appear with a storm, sometimes it is only through suffering that we may see the full beauty of God.

These truths can be hard to swallow when tragedies hit close to home. The campers at Camp Mystic succumbed to one of the worst fates on earth, the same fate that humanity suffered under the judgment of the Great Flood. But God has far from failed them; his covenant was far from broken. Because our hope lies not in the absence of suffering and death in this life, but in the bliss that lies beyond. Had they seen a small beam of colorful glory, I pray they were reminded of the gracious God they would soon see face-to-face.

I plugged my SD card into my laptop and scrolled through the photographs I had taken during my trip. I reached the photo I had taken that day in Yellowstone. Magnificent waters hurled themselves off a cliffside, into the winding river encased by two steep valleys.

In the bottom right-hand corner, an interesting visual appeared. A glimpse of color. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple illuminated the cliffside. It was faint – hardly noticeable. But what my eye was drawn to was not this, but a silhouette of a sprawling tree emerging from the cliffside: old and rugged.





SHOWERS IN THEIR SEASON

Addison Nevill

Scattered tip-tap trickles spill on the sill,
A quiet clinking rattle rapping on
My screen window on the second story.
From a distance, I peek at the drizzle,
Visible amidst the canopy of clouds,
Coating all in light liquid love that clings
To my peripheral like drips and drops.
Pitter-patter prayers leave my lips,
And with a spring, I step out into the mizzle.
Brisk stings dot my skin, and I wake to
Beauty pooling on the pavement,
Words dribbling on red rooftops,
Misty whispers leaking into my mind,
Love raining lightly, a reminder to live.
Steady and endless, I rest in the gentle rhythm,
But bristle as sprinkles start to shiver my fingertips.
Chilled, I duck through the door, a retreat.
I tune out the clitter-clatter calls
And wring out wisdom before it soaks in.

Your presence is a patient precipitation.

Drumming deep thuds, a double-pound sound
That grumbles and grasps and unsettles me.
Bulbs buzz and blink out of existence, leaving
Me behind in an ink-thick darkness indoors.
The bellows blow down my front door, beckoning
Me deeper into the rolling storm. I resist,
And sky-fire splits in splinter-crack static attacks

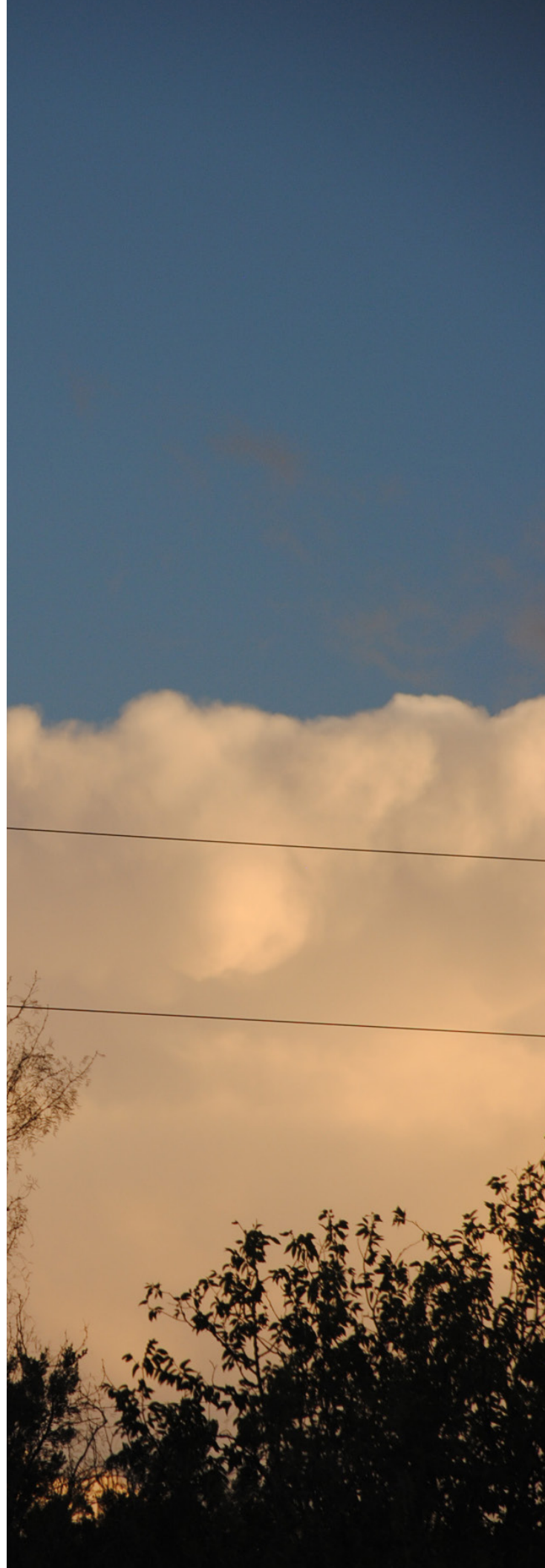
That choke me with awe. Hurling gusts of gale
Gasp and drag me from my haven to face
Heaven's outpour. Broad drops bludgeon my
Mortal mind, power surges in thick churns
That I can only drown in. I am horror-struck,
Astounded, ecstatic and dazzled as raw, yawning
Floods fall and swallow me whole. Sloshing sheets
Douse and drench me as sprawling clouds crown
The grayscale sky, and below the soil is soaked
through.

The maw of the overcast draws me in,
Lost in a cause that dwarfs me, pelted by a
Downpour so deep, all I can do is bow.

Your presence is a howling hurricane.

Grit sticks to my cracked lips as I awake
In a sandscape I must scavenge. I rasp
Tepid remarks, stiff steps shuffling onward.
Brittle and rusted, my bones blister under the
Dreaded sun. I crave a cloudburst, but the
Sky is sealed. Are there no signs of rain?
Or am I too inept and fickle
To pick out the wind shifts? I ache across
The red rock ridge, skeletal pricks of my
Ribs clicking as I take empty gasps. My skin
Is scorched, an ash-dusted, tarnished
Husk scraped raw. I talk till my tongue
Runs dry, utterances cut to parched hisses
That rattle my gravelly throat.
Mirages dance past the sand to
Distract and tantalize my gnawing heart.
But I am left hacking at the earth's crust,
Digging up chalky wisps. Hollow, I holler
Hoarsely. Sand crinkles in my teeth.

Your presence leaves me longing.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Sarah G. Adams

Sarah is a senior Government major from Cedar Park, Texas. She is grateful to have been challenged by *Terrain* to draw connections between her faith and other topics of interest such as politics, literature, & music. In addition, she loves adding to her long list of creative hobbies which includes singing, piano, embroidery, baking, and more.

Caroline Brown

Caroline is a junior from Eagle, Idaho. She's studying Neuroscience with a certificate in Core Texts and Ideas. She's fascinated by anything regarding the brain, memory, and ancient philosophy. In addition to writing and photography for *Terrain*, Caroline is an independent researcher in the Aptamers Lab and a leader in Ignite Texas. In her free time, she loves backpacking, exploring new places near or far, and reading the classics.

Nathan Brown

Nathan is a second-year student from Austin studying Mathematics and Economics. He works part-time as a tutor and is involved in *Terrain*, Hill House, the chess club, and the board game club. In his free time, he enjoys running, backpacking, writing on his blog, reading science fiction, and organizing games of tag and Capture the Flag on UT campus.

Braxton Bullock

Braxton is a third-year Philosophy and Government student from Lufkin, Texas. He has prior experience working in the Texas legislature, and he is president of BridgeTexas and an editor for the Texas Undergraduate Law Journal. His scholarly interests are in political theory, ethics, and analytical philosophy.

Lance Cartwright

Lance is a junior from the Woodlands, Texas, studying Computer Science and Mathematics. He is interested in linguistics, logic, and anything else that involves recursion. Apart from *Terrain*, Lance is the Public Relations Lead for Ignite Texas and a resident at Hill House Christian Study Center, where he can be found perfecting his celebrity impersonations and talking about his coursework (as opposed to actually completing it). Lance also enjoys painting, cooking, backpacking, and playing piano and guitar.

Karis Chiao

Karis is a freshman Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences major from Houston, Texas. Aside from writing in her free time, she is often found running around Austin, “studying” outside, learning random crafts, or spending time with friends. This year, along with *Terrain*, she has gotten involved with Texas Epic and AACM and volunteers at the Capitol School of Austin.

Avery Crowley

Avery is a sophomore Business and Civics major from The Woodlands, Texas. She is interested in the intersection of religion and politics. Beyond the classroom, she is involved in *Terrain*, Hill House, Ignite, and Providence Church. Avery enjoys reading, running, and watching the news in her free time, she is particularly fascinated by the French Revolution, and she would love to learn to play an instrument someday. As of right now, Avery wants to pursue a career in classical Christian education or law.

Madelyn Hajovsky

Maddie is a senior English major from Houston. She writes poetry and plays music and likes plants. She has a LinkedIn and wishes she didn't. Her dream is to start a community farm, read more books, and become a successful translator.

Audrey Hughes

Audrey is a second-year Psychology student from Houston, Texas. She has participated in *Terrain* as both a writer and an editor. In addition to *Terrain*, she is involved in Ignite Texas ministries and leads a small group at her church. In her free time, she enjoys running at Town Lake, coffee shop-hunting, going on long walks, reading, and exploring Austin.

Hannah Joy Legatowicz

Hannah Legatowicz is a third-year who studies philosophy and political theory; when she is not reading, writing, and thinking about thinking, she adores an adventure. She likes peppermint tea, Mozart, and paradoxes. She is delighted to be writing for *Terrain* and glorifying God through storytelling.

Hannah Claire McAnally

Hannah is a junior from Lewisville, Texas, studying History and Journalism. She is involved in childcare at a local church. Outside of *Terrain* and the Hill House community, she enjoys two-stepping at local honkytonks, hiking, reading, and spending time with friends.

Cara McMillan

Cara is a third-year International Relations, Religious Studies, and Asian Studies student from Waco, Texas. She handles the business side of *Terrain* and writes every now and then, but only under the severest compulsion. Cara is also involved in Hill House and their residency program, and she is glad to be old enough to have quit almost every other student organization. In the free time, she creates by not doing homework, she likes to learn languages, attempt rock climbing, and play classical guitar.

Addison Nevill

Addison is a first-year Radio-Television-Film major from Cypress, Texas. She has a passion for storytelling in all of its forms and dreams of working narratively in the entertainment industry. In her free time, she enjoys getting lost in the woods, watching the grackles outside of her dorm, struggling with screenplay formatting, and attempting to befriend the campus raccoons against her better judgement.

Hugh Nicholson

Hugh is a freshman on track for a degree in Geosciences. A fondness for UT's campus and general feel brings him to Texas from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. An off-the-streets traveler, Hugh simply feels honored to have been welcomed into such company as *Terrain*. In his own time, Hugh loves stargazing, mixing electronic music, long car trips, hikes, and feeling he has enough time.

Analise Pickerrell

Analise is a journalism senior from Folsom, California. Somehow, she's been paid to write by various publications, and if fortune favors her, that will continue. In the meantime, she enjoys getting into heated debates in entry-level philosophy classes, fixing other people's bad essays, and going on long, existential walks.

Isaiah Pyle

Isaiah is a third-year Supply Chain Management and Plan II Honors student from Houston, Texas. He is a member and volunteer at the Hill House Christian Study Center and a participant in its residency program. He is currently seeking to further integrate his faith into his daily life by ministering to the homeless population in Austin and learning to better view the world through a Christ-focused lens. Some of his passions include playing sports, hiking, reading and writing, anything to do with *The Lord of the Rings*, and spending whatever time he can enjoying the fellowship of his friends and family.

Mitchell Schultz

Mitchell is a third-year Chemical Engineering and Plan II Honors major from Austin. In addition to *Terrain*, he researches carbon capture solvents and sings in an acapella group. He likes to cook, play sports with friends, and make bad jokes. With any luck, his life today will be filled with more love, curiosity, and wonder than yesterday.

Jackson Taylor

Jackson is a third-year studying Philosophy and Mandarin, and is interested in pursuing international law. He is from inner city Houston, Texas and has a variety of educational experiences. He is interested in how journals like *Terrain* can both challenge other Christians in their beliefs about God, but also challenge views about Christianity from non-Christians as well.

Noah Thomason

Noah is a junior from Dallas, Texas, studying Biomedical Engineering and Plan II Honors. He likes pretending to be a polymath, considering different theological points of view, and free food. He is involved with other ministries, such as Reformed University Fellowship and Ignite Texas, in addition to *Terrain*. In his unfortunately scarce free time, he enjoys a good bout of contemplation. He is interested in writing ever-truer poems and habituating phronesis.

Molly Tompkins

Molly is a senior majoring in English and Plan II. She enjoys editing for several publications, including *Terrain*, *Hothouse Literary Journal*, and *Assay: A Journal of Nonfiction Studies*. Aside from reading 20th-century American literature and writing wacky short stories, Molly enjoys touring Austin's food truck scene.

Pateel Toranian

Pateel is a junior Mechanical Engineering student from Plano, Texas. In her free time, she loves to make collages, listen to her 700+ song playlist on repeat, try to play the drums, and dance. She finds great joy in being involved in her church, leading a small group and serving on the Sunday hospitality team. Matthew 6 is her current anthem.

Margaret Grace Voelter

MG Voelter is a junior Rhetoric and Writing and Radio-TV-Film double major from Austin, Texas. She is involved with creative ministry through Ignite Texas and loves serving with her church, especially on Sundays through the kids ministry. When she isn't seeking out new coffee shops around Austin, she enjoys painting, hiking and watching *Star Wars* with her roommates.

Mollie Walters

Mollie Walters was born in Abilene, Texas. She has a family, whom she loves dearly. Currently, she is earning her B.S. in Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences and Health Promotion and Behavioral Science. One of her favorite pastimes is hosting parties. Walters lives in Austin, Texas.

Madison Wu

Madison is a third-year business student from Austin, Texas, also pursuing various minors and certificates in Government, Health Care Reform & Innovation, and Core Texts & Ideas. Outside of *Terrain*, she is involved in Ignite Texas, Christian Business Student Council, and the nursery at her church. She enjoys starting creative endeavors and spending time with all the wonderful things the Lord has made.

ABOUT *TERRAIN*

Terrain is a Christian undergraduate journal at The University of Texas at Austin. We are a collective of writers, artists, and academics learning together to engage in virtuous and meaningful discourse across UT's diverse landscape of thought.

Have something to say? We'd love to hear it.

You can find us on Instagram @terrain.ut or shoot us an email at terrainjournal@gmail.com.

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