

CAMP HAVENSIDE

*Camp Havenside*

*For Natalie;  
for the hell we went through  
and the heaven we never received.*

*<sup>22</sup>They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup>He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"*

*<sup>24</sup>He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."*

*<sup>25</sup>Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup>Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."*

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S U N D A Y

*When peace  
like a river  
attendeth my  
way*

what He  
this verse ~~wants~~ us  
says ~~to~~ do, I  
pretty ~~told~~ him  
clearly, I

if you really  
want cabin was  
yeah, it was forgiveness, pretty hot,  
always you need couldn't  
Thursday how much that was wear  
night longer when He  
we try our hardest to 'em

and you don't  
that was the <sup>wanna mess,</sup>  
greatest with the Big <sup>where Samael</sup>  
commandment, <sup>Guy, he'll zap</sup> He will come like  
but, <sup>ya on the spot</sup> a thief in the night"  
he didn't want <sup>ask the driver if we</sup>  
to hear any of <sup>did He ever get</sup> have an ETA yet  
it, I don't <sup>angry, though, I</sup>  
mean, the temple  
those prophecies,  
does that mean  
how tempting and that's true across  
the world, in all  
the paper <sup>religions, more or less</sup>  
so thin



there was a grand ol' king,  
 he had ten thousand men,  
 I don't know, man, I Amos, or  
 haven't read that one Ezekiel, or  
 the exact same thing they "The Lord will send on Malachi or  
 talked about this morning you curses, confusion somethin'  
 really? Do you and rebuke in everything just can't help but  
 think he does? wonder sometimes  
 it's just so hot, and I don't you put your hand to,  
 want to sweat all over until you are destroyed  
 myself, but no even and come to sudden ruin not in trouble last time, but  
 wonder I'm not sure anyone's going  
 what He's to really notice this year  
 goodness knows thinking He asks us to give up our  
 what all is out bodies as "living sacrifices,"  
 there in that forest we're He don't beat around the we have to wear it in the  
 almost bush, He means it, too, at least if the  
 there girls are around  
 now

oh gosh, did he have to  
he marched them up a hill, say that in the middle of  
and then he marched them down again, Sunday class?  
this morning, he just  
we don't do that, we  
don't believe in that servant leaders! droned on and on and on  
why you gotta make his tenor . . . oh man, his  
it awkward like that ah-hah, I got, I got the tenor, you just wait  
I think there's something "because of the evil you answer this time around  
in Romans about that have done in forsaking  
oh really? yeah, your ass is gonna Him. it was all just a complete joke  
that's not what he sweat out here I was just kind of,  
told me . . . think he was some Old language, please flirting, or, y'know, just  
every word was Testament dude or something, some older don't conform think he took it a little  
meant for me or prophet to the pattern of this too seriously . . . if your right eye  
oh my gosh, are you world," which ain't hard causes you to  
serious? to spot, lemme tell you stumble, gouge it  
out . . .

so God the love so  
 loved the world that  
 God loved the love the  
 love loved the world  
 that God so world the but tempt us into evil  
 love and God so loved boys just don't  
 lead us not into understand that  
 deliverance for God so loved the world that world so  
 so loved the world loved loved the God my, oh, my I have betrayed you, yes,  
 the world love God that **hE gUiDeTh Me** yes I have betrayed you her mouth was a  
 God loved the world so and when you're down, you're up, scarlet ribbon, the  
 the God love the love we all have a bigger or fruit, the fruit was  
 just end it all already smaller load, we all do disciples crouch about Him, righteous, I  
 that love loved the world He wants us to be and His hands do touch us so  
 for God so loved the servant leaders **Amen?** He guideth me my hands  
 world that world so "You will be pledged to be married He guideth them He  
 world the world that love to a woman, but another will take her guideth me and  
**gOuGe iT oUd** and rape her. You will build a house, what is that even  
 so God the love so but you will not live in it. You will supposed to mean?  
 loved the world that give Him what you have left plant a vineyard, but you will not love is spiritual – it  
 God loved the love even begin to enjoy its fruit, " permeates everything  
 the love loved the love yeah, whatever and when it's all over? yes, please . . .  
 world that God so you say, man get right church, and let's go home! **i hAvE bEtRaYED you** it is better for you to lose  
 world the love and these bodies, man . . . one part of your body than  
 God so loved the blue skies and rainbows worst curse he could for your whole body to be  
 world that world so and sunbeams from hallowed be thy given us thrown into hell."  
 loved the God

Va'eira.

[illegible]

Sam's eyes were closed. He kept listening.

*And he hid, he hid from God, in shame of his nakedness.*

He swallowed. His throat was a broken, withered cistern, dry and cracked with thirst.

*Adam flees, hides from the Lord, tries to cover himself up, tries to keep God from seeing his ugliness. And is that not us? Is that not what we do daily, try to cover our shame, our ugliness, our sin.*

His eyes slid open, shut, then in between, suspended in a greenish blur.

*And I say, 'Lord, I am unsightly! I am unsightly before Thine eyes, I am nothing before You, I am but the grime and grit beneath Your feet, how could You ever choose someone like me?' Because we, as God's creation, have not been good to Him. Right? We've turned our backs on God more times than we can count, we've disobeyed Him, sinned against Him, chosen our own selfish desires over Him—we've nailed Him to a cross. Why would we deserve His love?*

Sam's vision flitted between sleep and wake as the voice, the voice of the preacher from that very morning, flitted alongside him, out of sync.

*But it's in these verses . . . in these verses, He says 'No no no. You . . . are My people. You are My bride. Nothing in this world could ever separate you from My love, no matter how hard you try. No matter how much you sin. I will never, never turn my back on you.'*

Sam inhaled.

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*Amen, brothers and sisters? Amen.*

He exhaled, and the voice faded. But it was replaced by other things, other sounds, other sights, one coming quick through the darkness toward him. He didn't recognize it, until it reached him and he saw it wasn't so much an image as it was words, many words, arranging themselves into a pattern unrecognizable until their full assembly. He broadened his gaze, then narrowed it to the individual letters, reading them like writing on a black wall.

*“And you, my son Solomon,  
acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and  
with a willing mind,  
for the Lord searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought.*

*If you seek him, he will be found by you;  
but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.”*

His eyes felt to close, already shut. When they felt to open, the words were gone. So he listened, and heard. Asked, and received.

*In Romans 12, Paul tells us—urges us, implores us all, all of Christians. He begs us, writes, ‘Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.’ A living sacrifice. That is what God asks of us.*

Sam listened.

*A living sacrifice. That is what God asks of us. To offer up our bodies—offer up everything to Him. This morning, church family, I ask you: are you up to it? Are you ready to meet that ask?*

Sam felt a lurch inside of him. His skin was grimy, heavy. He pursed his lips, ran a leathery tongue over the inside of his cheeks. His neck felt the collar of his polo shirt, brushing rough against the skin. His body shifted, shuffled, but around him in the darkness they all continued, continued to shout, to laugh, to whisper. He tried to hear all of them but could not, and all that he heard he couldn't hear clearly, and that which he tried to hear most of all he could not find. Was it the composite voice of all voices he stood bewildered in the center of? Or was it there, somewhere in the midst with him, hiding or denying him its presence? Or did his ears merely fail, unfit to fathom the secret with their fragile flesh, and if so, then what of him? Would he ever hear it? Or would he only hear the one voice, that fervent, proclaiming voice, so certain and so resolute, encapsulated within his memory from just a few hours before:

*Why on earth would you ever want to turn down such a gift?*

And amid the voices, the verses, the sounds, Sam could no longer hear himself.

...  
...  
...

Then it was quiet.

...  
...  
...



Sam looked up, or tried to. He found that his face was already turned directly upwards. So he looked down.

There was a dark light. Distant, but seeming to become closer, was an arrangement of lights, suspended in darkness. He could not tell if he was coming closer to the light or it to him, but it wasn't long before he could see them clearly enough to know what they were.

Seven burning torches stood before him, arranged in a nearly-completed circle. The open end was facing him. Between them was a shape.

Sam squinted, tried to see it clearly. It was tall. It was wide. It was rough on the sides, jagged and uneven. Its edges just barely illuminated, Sam could not see anything more than this. He wondered if it could see him.

*"Who are you?"*

It was a few moments after Sam asked this that he realized he could hear his own voice again. There were no other sounds to lose himself within. Just a lonesome, unwitnessed, almost holy silence.

The shape did not reply. No sound at all came from it, or from anywhere, just Sam's question, echoing through the obscurity, reverberating all around him . . . all around him . . .

Light struck Sam's eyelids, and he opened them.

He sat up, rubbed his eyes. His forehead peeled off the glass of the bus window, and his dream vanished from memory. He blinked sluggishly. He looked outside, squinting against the rays falling upon him, and found, half-silhouetted in front of them, a sign.

CAMP HAVENSIDE  
MADE BEAUTIFUL WITHIN MULTITUDE OF BRANCHES

Birds chirped. Trees rustled. Cicadas hummed in the distance.

Sam picked up his Bible as the youth group excitedly rose from its seats.



A gentle twilight faded the campgrounds into gray, and the reddening sun vanished.

Without the polo shirt, the heat was bearable. Instead, Sam wore a thin linen of wool as he walked down a gravel road that ran parallel to the parked bus. He didn't know where the road led. All the others had stayed to explore the cabins further or play Ultimate Frisbee in the field. He polished his glasses with his shirt and looked on.

He sucked water from the tube of a Camelbak pouch on his back. At his side was a view bathed in dying light—white tin roofs on squat brick buildings, on the far side of a grassy strip with grey gazebos and picnic tables of scant red paint, and a towering oak tree circled by an angular, hexagonal wooden bench. Each church's vehicle sat one behind another, parked just beside the girls' cabins like watchful sentinels. Behind them, clotheslines were strung between trees like a protective net over the cabins, and campers passed between doors, their hair wet. And on Sam's right, a long wall of trees.

As he turned toward it, the wall yielded an abrupt gap in the trees, the branches peeled back to form an opening. At its base was a brick pathway that turned quickly into stairs, downward. Sam approached the edge of the uneven descent, peering. Distant and birdlike cries resounded through the woods, equal parts jovial and gasping. He could hear voices down there.

He stepped forward. The brush was thick but navigable. Each narrow step was a small yet precarious ledge against which his feet skirted, shambled. Treetops contradicted themselves with thin, dusky light beyond their leaves, and their shadows overhanging everything below. As the sun died, shades of green and brown looked grayer with each second, muddled together with the bark and soil. Through the gaps in branches, slanted lines of red sunlight marked the pathway with vague illumination, like scarlet spider webs gleaming. And it was all still.

Sam finally descended the last stair, stepping out of the trees and into the sunlight, onto a dewy, leaf-strewn circle of ground. Just a few paces to his left, the makeshift tunnel opened back up upon a muddy walkway, closed by forest on its left side. On its right side was open grass and a huddle of teenagers, the land beyond them formed into a small peninsula that jutted into a mossy lake.

Sam looked at the ripples on the surface. It was water that had potentially been pure at one point in time, now irreversibly soiled to shades of green. On the opposite shore was a makeshift wooden cross on, high atop a distant acclivity.

“Ohp . . . Timothy, you may have a savior. Sam has come to reap my soul.”

Sam looked at the people in front of him. Shane, grinning toothily beneath two middle-parted brown bangs, held shut the door to a small, ramshackle cabin next to the peninsula. Four girls in tie-dye shirts and athletic shorts watched, laughing and murmuring.

“What’s . . . happening?” Sam asked.

“Well, it’s a simple story,” Shane said. “It begins with Timothy outside of this door. It ends with . . . well.”

“It’s been going on like this for several minutes,” said a girl from the enclosed circle.

“And all thanks to our benefactor Molly over there. She said—”

“I already said to let him out!”

“—she said, she said I should trap somebody inside to find out what it’s like.”

“I said I *wonder* what it’s like in there.”

“Well, you weren’t walking in there yourself, now were you? Rather have a man go in for you, a big strong man like Timothy go in for you.”

Sam looked closer at the cabin. Weeds stood invasively high, reaching even higher around that little veiled and vine-covered structure, sunken into the ground. He studied it; it was dimly similar to the cabins now far behind him, but nowhere near synonymous. Ivy and leafed strands seemed to grow off it in proportion to its decay. Its walls were stained, nearly caved in.

Swift and percussive pounds beat from inside, held back by Shane’s thick, pale arms all but bare through his olive tank top. Molly squatted on thick legs, her black hair dangling in union with the grass, watching and giggling.

“Not my fault, Timothy,” Shane panted. “Molly just enjoys watching the suffering of others.”

“I do not!” she protested through a grin.

“She’s a greedy lady, she just, she wants what she wants, that’s it.”

The door flung open, knocking Shane away as Timothy’s emerging head collided with him, barely meeting Shane’s chest. Timothy threw a thin arm around in a right hook, scuffling, wrestling Shane, away from the cabin.

The door remained open, gaping. Its barely hinged mouth was ajar, meshed in foliage of massive lengths and densities, blades blowing lightly in the breeze

like breath. Sam drank from his water-pouch, peering inside, watching shades of black become gray, the color of moths in a flame's light.

"Your turn!"

Two hands struck into his shoulder blades, shoving him through the open door. The door slammed shut, the thud of Molly's inert body audibly blocking it.

*"Boom!"*

*"Ohhhhh, what now?"*

*"Oh my gosh, you idiots . . ."*

*"See? She loves it!"*

Little could be perceived in the room. Branches were invited through fissures in the iron over which they crawled obsessively, forcibly demonstrated dominion. A few bed-bunks stood, though empty of any mattresses; a cabin, then. It smelled vaguely foul. The floor was littered with leaves and neglect. The ceiling bore broken bulbs of a light fixture, bonelike shards like a claw. Though the walls were of thin iron, unlike the other, brick-built cabins, a hush coated the air, thick, heavy, not of noise removed, but silence put deliberately in place. A cabin, then.

Directly in front of Sam, in a gap between bunks, a small amalgamation of vines formed some obscure shape, some indistinct insignia, beginning and ending on the wall, unlike the other tangles coming in from the roof. The shape was about the size of his Bible and consisted entirely of crude lines all coagulating into a roughly humanoid shape. Its head and torso were masses of squiggles, as were its outstretched arms, ending with jagged and pointed fingers sticking outwards as if in reception, or approach. In that cabin, it was all black, all a blend of thin strokes and colorless lines, all against a gray background that elucidated nothing, made everything unreadable, made uncertainty permanent.

"What's even in there, anyway?"

Molly entered, leaving the door open and letting in a shaft of light. Sam saw with clarity.

The shape was not of vines at all, rather ink from some kind of marker. Sam could now see the gaps between the lines, the wall behind the scrawling, and, under the figure's right arm, a small subtitle.

"GILLY"

"What is that?" Molly asked, approaching Sam's side.

Sam shrugged. "Gilly."

“Gilly?” she repeated with laughter. “Well. He looks pleasant.”

A mirthfully strangled soprano squealed from behind. Sam turned to see Shane pressing up against the back of a girl, sticking his fingers into her sides.

“Shane, stah-ha-op it!” she squeaked. “That ti-hi-hickles!”

“Someone’s awful handsy,” Molly said loudly, exiting the cabin. Sam turned back to the portrait.

Then he turned back around and exited the cabin, closing the door soundly behind him.

Lemme hear you say *God is good!*

*All the time!*

And *and all the time?*

*God is good!*

Wonderful, be seated.

How about that worship? Real moving stuff. Yeah, Dennis, just so you know, whenever I'm alone in my car singing along to the radio, I try to do my best impression of you every time. Don't always work out real well, but I still do my best.

Now, this year, as many of you know and as Dennis mentioned earlier, is the first sermon that Camp Havenside has had since . . . the seventies? I think it was the seventies. So it's been a while. And when it comes to camp themes, I was sitting down, really trying to think about it. Prayed about it and asked the Lord what He thought I should deliver to y'all this week. And honestly, I think it's pretty simple, but it goes a long, long way if you understand it right. The theme for this week—and I want you to really think about this—is 'Will.'

What does that mean? What is a will, what does that imply, where, where does that begin? What does the word even mean—we can ask that for starters, right? Well . . . the dictionary defines it as 'control deliberately exerted to do something or to restrain one's own impulses.' Okay; so that's what it means as far as vocabulary goes, as far as the base definition of the word. Right? But what does that mean for *us*? For followers of God? It's no secret that in the Bible, there are a lot of pretty prominent examples of how one's will plays a role in what we think, how we act, and, most importantly, what we believe. And these definitions, I think, match up perfectly.

If we turn to the book of Job, middle of the Old Testament, we find a prime example of how will directly affects our faith in God. This guy Job—you all know

the story—he loses just about everything he owns. His cattle, his home, his daughters, all of it gone. And Job’s down there saying, ‘God, why. Why did this have to happen? Why did you have to take all of this from me?’ But it is written that, while he grieves all of his losses, chapter one verse twenty-two, it’s written: *In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.* That right there is the second half of the definition. Control deliberately exerted to restrain one’s own impulses—Job is saying, ‘No, I’m not gonna let these things destroy me, I’m gonna continue to praise God and honor His name above all.’ He’s controlling his impulses—an impulse we all have, really: the impulse to blame God. To curse Him. To pin it all on the big man upstairs, right?

But we all know the story; eventually, God goes a little farther. Takes Job’s *health* away from him, and suddenly it’s like that was the straw that broke the camel’s back, and Job loses it. In chapter three, Job cries out, *May the day of my birth perish, and the night that said, ‘A boy is conceived!’ That day—may it turn to darkness.* He says, ‘God, that’s it, I’ve had it up to here! I’m through with you doing all these things to me for no reason!’ And he curses God’s name.

And, as we all know, that doesn’t go so well for him in the end, does it? We all know the story; God puts Job in his *place*. Right? God puts him down, says ‘No no. That’s not how this conversation’s gonna happen.’ And He demonstrates to Job just how *small*, just how *limited* Job and his perspective really are. Those of you who have read the book know that it is a *nasty* passage, it is some less-than-tender words from our Father.

So why? Why does God do this, why does God go out of His way to put Job through so much trouble, and then humble Job so thoroughly? The answer, I think, is this—guys, list’n—it’s that we, as Christians, cannot fall into the same mistake that Job makes. And God had to teach Job that lesson—clearly, it was one he had yet to learn. I’ll tell you now, guys, there’s a *lot* of bad things out there in the world. Right? Some of you already know that, you’re saying ‘yeah, Calvin, that ain’t exactly breaking news,’ it’s not. It’s no secret—there are a *lot* of bad things out there, just like the bad things that happened to Job. But does that mean those bad things contradict our one Good Thing? Did all the torture and suffering that Job had to go through invalidate God’s presence in Job’s life, the *plan* that God had for Job? Did it mean that God had turned His *back* on Job—I don’t think so. So why should all the bad things in this world—and some of ‘em you may have already been through. You may be in the same place Job was, saying ‘God, why. Why me, why did you let this happen to me?’ But Scripture



tells us, tells us in this book, that just because those bad things happen, doesn't mean it contradicts the plan that God has for each and every one of you. Just like He had for Job.

So think about this week. Amid all the good things I know we're excited for—we're excited for worship, we're excited for Frisbee, we're excited for flagpole every morning at eight AM sharp—I know *y'all* are, now, I know. But amid those good things, let's talk about the bad things. What are the *bad* things that might happen here at Camp Havenside? What is it that's gonna try to distract you, or bring you down, or try and get in the way of you *connecting* with God, and spending this week with our Lord? And are you gonna stand up, face up to those things, and say, 'No, not gonna happen, you're not gonna get me down—I'm gonna praise the Lord my God no matter what.'

Or are you gonna let those bad things ruin the week for you like Job did, and then curse God for it?

Let's pray.

*Camp Havenside*

Night was falling.

The water of the pond became still, dark. The grass grew crisper, firmer. The hum of locusts rose in the air. The stars gleamed down from above, but in the forest they were not visible.

And as the colors of the forest changed, the warmth of sunlight withdrew from Camp Havenside.



She dipped the marshmallow directly into the fire.

Sam's fingers tapped on the empty log beneath him. The sun had long since set, leaving a jewel-studded sky in its place, and the camp had gathered on the east side of the grounds where a campfire space was already arranged. Sam glanced round the fireside. There were exchanges between campers distantly, words that he couldn't hear. Beside him, Shane snickered alongside Molly in two harmonizing tones, his dim, lightless eyes exchanging with her spessartine ones.

"You know, something tells me we wouldn't get away with *that* one . . ."

A whisper.

Another laugh. "What a vocabulary . . . where you come up with this stuff, huh?"

Another whisper, then a laugh.

"Excuse you, missy."

A blow, then a bite—Sam looked forward again, away from them. The flames licked and flickered upwards as if to reach her. Conscious brown eyes baked in an auburn glaze. Thin blue cotton hung from a form already wiry, met a black barrier, Nike shorts with white lining. Around her head like a tranquilized serpent was a chestnut ponytail, tamed and neglected on her head, barely visible aback the nighttime, the vacuum from which all other light was polluted as if to erase. Eyes lay vacant on the flames. A vaguely curved mouth. Side-by-side with solitude. Her eyes, lips, and hands closed, a quiet reservation.

"Hey everybody, list'n up."

The wide and muscular shape of Calvin Sanders interrupted the fire, light glowing atop his buzzed scalp. In his arms was the tiny shape of young Isaiah, barely visible, silhouetted by fire.

"List'n," Calvin repeated through an under-bite. "I won't stand here very long, I already took up your time today on stage, but little Isaiah just wanted to say goodbye; he's headed back home tonight with his mama, but he wanted to see y'all off."

Fawning cheers from the circle.

"But yeah, have a good night, everybody, get in bed soon so you can get to flagpole on time tomorrow, and, other than that, uh . . . make sure to check out

the stars tonight, because, lemme tell you, out here you're gonna see some lights up there you can't see anywhere else but the wilderness, I'll tell you that much."

Calvin dissolved back into the darkness. Sam looked up. Light gleamed in the night sky, dim, barely visible, polluted by the orange flame at Sam's feet. He looked back down at the campfire as it destroyed something else to make its light. He looked back up to the stars as they destroyed themselves. The glow was different. The result was the same.

*For dust you are . . .*

Sam put his palms behind him and leaned back into a lack of light, sound, or breath.

Eyelids closed. The ground beneath him continued to shift, a rock continuing its endless orbit, pulling along the thin string of time, and everything dragged all tethered behind it. Eyelids tightened. Fingers gripped and pulled out blades of grass as if to epilate the earth, to wound the world. They all had it. Each of the souls around the campfire had it. They spoke of it, sang of it, boasted of it, even—but it was nowhere inside of him. He felt its absence keenly, clear to him in that constant simulation of eventual absence, that space between lid and iris where his whole existence was contained, hanging forever before him in the day and the impossible night alike—nowhere inside of him. He had searched already, fathomed already, listened measuredly to the acoustics of his heart, felt closely around the sinews of his mind. But it was not there, and if it was not there, then where could he find it, and if he could not find it then he could not have it, and if he could not have it maybe he was never meant to, never humble enough to see it, never strong enough to hold it. One day, all would be as it should be, and he would remain there on the ground without needing to be cast back down. One day the stone would not need to be rolled away. One day the search would be final and fruitless, and the rest of Heaven and earth would have no consciousness of the irregularity that was him, no consciousness of any song he had sung, of any him that he had been. The whole struggle would be swallowed by the closing of a coffin lain in the dry desert of his soul, the only temptation worth giving in to, as eyelids closed.

*. . . to dust you will return.*

Eyelids opened.

The stars were there. Away from the fire, he could see them more clearly. Lights interrupting the black, twinkling mutedly, holes opened in the fabric of the sky. They were unmoving. No sound from inside him threatened them,

towering miles above the soil into which his body was pressing. The earth beneath him upon him ever-shifted—but the stars were constant above. Talk of campfires and cabins and swimming pools and Frisbees and water coolers and chapels carried on under the sun—but it was all in ownership of the stars. He adjusted his glasses. *Some lights up there you can't see anywhere else but the wilderness.*

Camp Havenside. Earth, water, blazing sun. Forest in all directions, and somewhere hidden, a garden. A broken cistern cracked, an eternal thirst. Stars made crosses in the sky.

*They will ask the way to Zion and turn their faces toward it. They will come and bind themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant that will not be forgotten.*

Sam's lips resealed themselves, and with them, a covenant.



Brenda Sanders sat in the driver's seat of the minivan and slid the key into the ignition.

*it's in me . . .*

Brenda Sanders buckled and disengaged the emergency brake.

*it's inside of me . . .*

Brenda Sanders shifted gear into reverse and pulled out on the dirt road.

*there is something inside of me . . .*

Brenda Sanders turned around.

"Isaiah, you sleep-talkin' again?"

His eyes were wide open. His head hung backwards against the seat as if dead and determined to show his dead face. Drool slipped slow and thick down the side of his mouth.

"Isaiah, you alright?"

"Mommy . . . some . . . something . . ."

"What is it, honey?"

“ . . . something bad is here . . . ”

“Here? Here at camp?”

“It is here . . . it . . . it was before us . . . it came  
here before us . . . it was here before us . . . it’s . . .  
it’s . . . it’s coming up—”

“Honey . . . honey, now, it’s okay, don’t be  
scared, it’s okay. Nothing was here before us,  
honey, nothing . . . nothing came here, you  
don’t have anything to be afraid of.”

“Nothing . . . nothing . . . ”

“Nothing is here that didn’t come here  
with us. Okay?”

“ . . . it walks . . . it is walking . . . ”

“What?”

.....

“Honey?”

.....

“Isaiah?”

.....