

Dear Austin,

A sad madman is now in charge of our whole operation. From the height of his cockpit he waves like a conductor in full seizure directing *The Rite of Spring* with a tree branch and a plugged-in toaster dropped in bathwater as the feral musicians scratch old scars and spar like swashbuckling silent movie stars. I don't pray but my body speaks in wracks and heaves. I sigh. My heart does its own thing, the organs comply. I see you often, elusive in flight, sometimes alighting on a fence or wire. This morning in the hedge, a commotion, a keening like gnashing teeth being pulled, then silence. Between alarm and snooze I saw you dressed in white running shirt and black shorts and shoes. You came in the side door as if back from a run. I went full father-of-the-prodigal-son and leapt but you disappeared into my waking. For a while I would open the blinds in your room and light a candle, but this just illuminated your absence. As your grandmother was dying, Annie the bubbly medical tech wrote *Love Never Fails* on the dry erase board. I thought about erasing it, the image of you hanging from your bunk, but I didn't. I left it there, letting her think it true.