



What was I hoping for, some kind of salvation? I was some beggar by the roadside, an old man in a field. I would have let the toes go, blackened. Dead. My fingers, too.

If I had been found, then hospitalized, an IV drip, those tan blankets wrapped around me in layers. Diagnostic tests, condescending doctors—no pity for the old man, no sympathy for a brain in decline.

If I was returned home, would I return to the side of the road, pick up my shoes and socks? Would I wear them again, like I had never made that choice? Could I look up toward Corbina's house?

I don't want those questions. I would not want my family's concern, their eyes waiting for my end; the veiled anticipation of freedom and loss.

The death of a parent is different for an adult than a young adult. The departed character becomes gilded.

The whole episode would have started distancing and distrust, suspicion.

What motive could have driven me from the house? Something less easy to acknowledge than an old brain. I imagine the phone call to my mother and brothers, the people I haven't talked to in years.

The numbers were written in an old red binder in a cabinet under the phone. My wife, announcing herself timidly to them, having met them only a few times at the very beginning of our relationship and never seeing them once we were married. They weren't invited to the wedding.

A family history of violence? Depression?

That family only called to tell me about deaths. I sent only unsigned cards, willing to be connected only anonymously. Even those cards felt like a compromise, a weakness I would regret. I see them balk at her questions. They tell her to leave them alone, the suggestion of a mental illness an insult.

My wife went along with cutting them off. She never challenged me. It was one of the things that made me feel closer to her. She said, "If you don't want them in your life, there must be a reason."

What reason was that?

It was easier.

What luck that Corbina looked out her front window. What stupid luck.

A first separation to prepare the family for the final one.

I wanted something to lift me up by the armpits and show me the world from that height. We all want to be lifted. To rise.

A cutting and editing of a person. A paring down. I wanted to pull in severely and be rid of all that is familiar and once thought of as necessary.

To die.