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# Simon Birch

By Mark Steven Johnson

Mr. Roberts.  
I am doomed to  
remember a boy with a wrecked voice.  
Not because of his voice  
or because he was...  
the smallest person  
I ever knew...  
or even because he was  
the instrument of my mother's death,  
but because he is the reason  
I believe in God.  
What faith I have,  
I owe to Simon Birch,  
the boy I grew up with  
in Gravestown, Maine.  
It is Simon that  
made me a believer.  
Hi, Mr. Roberts!  
- ...strengthen your heart all ye  
that will hope in the Lord.  
I'm gonna leave you alone  
with your thoughts now.  
And when I come back  
we'll talk about...  
what we've just read.  
Silently and seriously,  
that's how I want you to think.  
Our Sunday school teacher  
was an unhappy woman...  
by the name of Miss Leavey.  
Her name suited her perfectly,  
as she was always leaving class.  
He's so cute.  
Simon Birch was so tiny  
that we loved to pick him up.  
Hey, put me down.  
In truth, we couldn't resist  
picking him up.  
We thought it was a miracle  
how little he weighed.  
Cut it out,  
you assholes.  
Hey, no tickling.  
I'm warning you.

Pass him to me!

Simon Birch?

Down!

I never understood

Miss Leavey's reaction.

Did she think Simon

climbed up there on his own?

Or that leaving us alone with our  
thoughts had so empowered us that...

Simon was levitating up  
to heaven?

But Simon was no rat.

As vividly as any story in the Bible,  
Simon showed us what  
a martyr was.

Simon Birch

was the smallest delivery...  
every recorded in the history  
of Gravestown Memorial Hospital.

Okay, Mrs. Birch...

the nurse is gonna give you  
a shot here to help with the pain...

- and then we'll get started.

- Okay.

Gesundheit!

- Ooh!

- Ooh!

- Doctor!

Oh-Oh, dear.

Simon's father owned  
the Birch Granite Company.

Mr. Birch was a big believer  
in the rock.

And just about everything  
in their house was made from granite,  
including Mr. Birch.

Excuse us, please. Excuse us.

Excuse us, please.

Heh!

Along with

just about everything else...

Simon was born

with an undersized heart.

The prognosis wasn't good,

and Dr. Wells warned...  
the Birches that Simon probably  
wouldn't last through the night.  
Fit-Fit right there  
in the palm of my hand.  
But he did.  
Still, the complication seemed  
too great, and Dr. Wells warned...  
the Birches that Simon probably  
wouldn't last through the week.  
But he did.  
The Birches didn't know what to make of  
their peculiar, little disappointment.  
So they made nothing  
of it at all.  
I'm going to work.  
Weeks turned into months.  
And months  
turned into years.  
Come on, we're late.  
No, you're late.  
I'm just riding with you.  
The doctors proclaimed Simon a miracle.  
And he was quick to remind any of us  
if we forgot.  
Not so fast. Slow down.  
- I'm a miracle, you know.  
- Yeah. Yeah.  
But even miracles  
can't go on forever.  
And although we never talked about it,  
it was never far from our minds.  
Here they come,  
the Wenteworth bastard  
and his granite mouse.  
Hey, Birch, nice  
sidecar. What you use? A matchbox?  
Have a nice day.  
Goddamn kids got no respect  
these days.  
It's another beautiful...  
autumn day friends,  
and so sit back, relax...  
and so let "Big Daddy"

Dave Barton do the driving...  
as we cruise on down  
the highway of hits here on WGV...  
the sound of Gravestown.  
Let's click on the turnstiles  
of our wax files.  
This one goes out  
to our Gravestown Tigers.  
Baseball is a lot  
like life for a 12-year-old.  
You spent most of your time  
waiting for the excitement to begin...  
only to discover later  
that it's already past you by.  
Think out there, boys.  
Okay? When you're out there, think!  
- I was just thinking.  
- Yeah?  
- Last year we played  
in the squirt league, right?  
- Uh-huh.  
- And this year we're in the peewees.  
- So?  
Do they want us  
to play baseball or urinate?  
Anyway,  
I was just thinking.  
My mom got pregnant  
during her senior year at high school.  
The fact that she refused  
to divulge my father's identity...  
- upgraded it to a full-fledged scandal.  
- Hi, Joe!  
Hi, Miss Wentworth.  
Hi, Simon.  
How's my little doll?  
Your mother has the best breasts  
of all the mothers.  
- Yeah.  
- And she smells the best too.  
- I know.  
- She's so sexy that...  
sometimes I forget  
she's someone's mother.

- Okay! Okay!

- I was just being honest.

Well, what if I said  
the same thing about your mother?  
I'd have you committed.  
Nobody knew her secret. Not even me.

- And I wouldn't know it to this day,  
if it wasn't for Simon Birch.

- Ooh!

Birch, on deck.  
Go get 'em, Simon.  
You go, Simon.  
You'll be wonderful.  
Simon loved baseball.  
I'm not sure why.  
He rarely got to play and when he did,  
he was ordered not to swing.  
His strike zone  
was minuscule.  
Holy shit!  
Ha! Look at this kid.

- It's the friggin' hobbit.

- Nah, it's Thumbelina.

- You're both wrong.

It's a pinch-hitting munchkin.

- Okay, all right.

- Let's play ball.

Do your thing, Simon.

- Show 'em how it's done.

- Okay, Foster, he's yours.

- 0-1.

- Good eye, Birch.

- Good eye, son.

- Foster, easy.

- You don't need your fastball  
on this guy.

- 0-2.

- All right. Lay it in easy, now.  
I'm trying. Shit!

- Zero, three.

- That was great!

- Way to watch.

- Thank you, Miss Wenteworth.

All right. Let's go Foster,

buddy. Right in there, buddy.

- Ball four!

- Shit!

Take your base.

- Whoa!

- Take a look at that!

Be waiting for you next time.

Your head's bigger

than your strike zone, pal.

Pitchers always threatened

to hit Simon, but it rarely happened.

I think they were afraid

of killing him.

Hi! How's it going?

Six, seven,

- eight, nine, ten.

- Timber-r-r!

Race you to the quarry.

I'm gonna beat you. I know a shortcut.

- No, you don't.

One year good luck.

- One year good luck.

Told you I knew a shortcut.

- Oh, man, that's cold.

- It's freezing.

Oh, man, my balls

just turned into marbles.

My balls just turned

into BBs.

- Time me.

- Simon!

- Please!

- Why does it matter how long...

- you can hold your breath?

- I don't know. It just does.

One Mississippi.

Two Mississippi.

Three Mississippi.

Four Mississippi.

- Hi, Joe!

- Hi, Ann.

Hi, Marjorie!

What are you guys up to?

- No good.

- Where's Simon?

He's around.

- He's so adorable.

- Like a little doll.

Time! Time! Time!

- Thirty Mississippi.

- Thirty Mississippi?

Thirty Mississippi?

I counted 34 Mississippi.

You know, why do you have me count it  
if you are just gonna count yourself?

I want a verification.

- Hi, Simon.

When did they get here?

- About 14 Mississippi.

- Marjorie's got breasts.

- Yeah.

- And soon they'll be boobs.

- I know.

Maybe she'll let us

touch them sometime,

- if we paid her.

- Why don't you ask her?

- Oh, uh, Marjorie?

- Stop it! Stop it!

Uh, Simon has a question  
for you.

- What is it, Simon?

- Nothing. Good-bye.

He wants to know, uh,

maybe if he paid you...

could he touch your bre...

- He wants to know

if he could touch your bre...

- Quiet! Okay?

He wants to know if...

- He wants to know...

He just wants to know...

- I think Marjorie likes you.

- She likes you.

- She said you were cute.

- She means cute

like a baby turtle is cute.

- Girls don't kiss baby turtles.



- How do you know?

I just know.

If you were me,  
you'd know too.

But things  
will be different...  
once God makes me  
a hero.

You know, you shouldn't talk  
about this hero stuff, Simon.

- Why not?

- Because it's weird.

- The other kids tease you  
enough as it is.

- I don't care. It's the truth.

But you don't have  
any proof.

I don't need proof.

I have faith.

Your problem is that  
you have no faith.

I got faith.

I just want proof to back it up.

We lived  
in my grandmother's house,  
a monster of a place.

- It was frequently mistaken  
for the Gravestown Inn.

- Shoo! Shoo!

- It's not an inn.

- The fact that never ceased...  
to irritate my grandmother.

But then again, most everything  
irritated my grandmother.

- Hi, Grandmother.

- Slow down.

Particularly Simon Birch.

- Hi, ladies!

- That creature.

But that's not to say  
that she didn't have her kind side.

In fact, when our maid Hildie got cancer  
and had to have her leg removed,  
Grandmother hired

two more maids,  
one just to look  
after Hildie.

Hildie never worked  
another day in her life.

And as the years went on, she even  
began to look like my grandmother...

- and not like a maid at all.
- That child is positively...
- unnatural.
- Most peculiar.
- And his voice like...
- A mouse.

More than one.

Like mice.

- Strangled mice.
- Strangled mice.

Very good, Hildie.

Hello, everyone!

What's wrong with you?

- There's nothing wrong with me.
- Hi, Mom.
- Somethin's goin' on.
- Yes, something's going on.

You look all... shiny.

Well, I met a man  
on the train.

- The good 'ol Boston and Maine.
- You're pregnant?

Mother, I just met him.

The last time you met a man  
on the Boston and Maine,

- you came home pregnant.
- Mother.
- Am I gonna have a little brother?
- Everyone, please.

I've only spoken with him,  
but I like him very much.

So, when do we get to meet  
this Mr. Wonderful?

Good Lord.

Yolanda!

Hey, wait up! Wait for me!

I wanna see too.

Simon Birch, get away  
from there. You'll scare him off.

I can't see.

I can't see.

- Hello, Ben.

- Hello, Rebecca.

- We were just talking about you.

- Really?

- Come on in.

- Thank you.

You must be Simon...

and that would make

you Joe?

Nice to meet ya. I heard all about you  
from your mom on the train.

- What's in the bag?

- Joseph!

Oh, no, no, that's okay. Uh, as  
a matter of fact, Joe, this is  
something that I bought for you.

My mother's dates

were always bringing me presents...

in their feeble attempts to win me over,  
but it never worked.

- So, Joseph, what do you say?

- Nice bag.

I tell you what.

Um, why don't I take this...

and just put it right over here  
on this table.

And then you can take a look  
at it if you feel like.

It's probably  
some stupid Legos or something.

Oh, um, could you guys  
do me a favor?

Uh, just keep an eye  
on the bag for me.

And, uh, give me a holler  
if it moves.

Okay?

Thanks.

You're a drama teacher?

- They teach that?

- Well, what I try and do,  
Mrs. Wentworth,  
is-is use the theater to get students  
to express themselves...  
- in ways they normally couldn't.  
- How do you do that?  
Well, one way that I found  
works well is by introducing props.  
- Young people seem to respond to that.  
- What kind of props?  
Well, kind of like the one  
I just left out there in the hall.  
Matter of fact, there could be a little  
drama unfolding just as we speak.  
We'll soon see.  
Oh, boy, that's a lot of peas.  
Why don't I just put  
a few of these back here?  
I don't need that  
many peas.  
- Did you see that?  
- What?  
- I think it moved.  
- You're imagining it.  
- Maybe it's a puppy.  
- Not unless it's a dead puppy.  
Yeah. He wouldn't bring  
a dead puppy on the first date.  
It's something else.  
I bet he's just putting us on.  
I bet there's nothing even in there.  
He's just playing a joke on us.  
Go ahead and open it.  
- I'm not opening it.  
- Don't you wanna see what's inside?  
What I want to do and what I do  
are two separate things.  
If we all went around doing what we  
wanted all the time, there'd be chaos.  
You open it.  
- The prop.  
- What was that?  
It's a monster!  
- You're okay.

- Help!  
Isn't he terrific?  
- He's going to eat us.  
- You're okay.  
It's just an armadillo.  
- A what?  
- It's a stuffed armadillo. See?  
I picked it up on my way  
through San Antonio last week.  
It's not that bad  
once you get used to it.  
What do you think, Joe?  
- I don't want it.  
- Can I have it?  
Well, why don't you, uh,  
uh, give it a chance!  
Maybe it'll grow on you.  
So Shirley Temple  
says to Senator McCarthy...  
- I didn't say, "commie,"  
I said, "Moppie."  
Uh, Mom?  
Can Simon sleep over?  
We wanna spend the night out  
under the stars.  
Sure, honey, as long as it's  
all right with Simon's parents.  
- They don't care.  
- Will you do me a favor anyway  
and call them?  
- Yeah?  
- Can I sleep over at Joe's tonight?  
- I don't care.  
- I'm ready for my good-night kisses.  
- Oh, Mom.  
- Me first! Me first!  
Oh, don't you "oh, Mom" me.  
Get up here. Mm-whaa!  
Good night, honey.  
Love you.  
Simon, isn't it  
a little cool outside?  
Don't you think  
you need a sweater?

It's hard to find sweaters  
my size.  
They have to make them special  
and my dad says they're too expensive.  
- How about that?  
- Thank you, Miss Wenteworth.  
- Mm. Love you.  
- Good night, Ben Goodrich!  
Bonsoir Monsieur Birch.  
Buenas noches,  
Senor Wenteworth.  
You boys stay in the yard.  
I like him.  
I don't.  
Maybe God sent him  
to be your father.  
God sent me a screwball  
with an armadillo?  
God has a plan for everyone,  
including Ben Goodrich.  
Well, he's not  
my father.  
My real father  
is out there somewhere.  
Mr. Hanson has your eyes.  
- The shop teacher?  
- And he's a lefty, like you.  
That's 'cause he chopped off  
his right thumb with the table saw.  
I didn't say  
he was a natural lefty.  
Maybe he chopped off his thumb  
on purpose to show your mother...  
how much he loved her,  
like Van Gogh with his ear.  
I can't see my mom being attracted  
to a metal shop teacher.  
Art or English maybe,  
but not metal shop.  
I don't understand  
why she doesn't just tell you.  
You're already a bastard.  
You might as well be an enlightened one.  
- She said she'd tell me

when I'm old enough.

- When's that?

I don't know.

Soon, I hope.

Things were getting

serious between my mother...

and the armadillo-wielding

Ben Goodrich,

enough so that one Sunday

she brought him with us to church.

Hi, Joe! Hi, Miss Wenteworth!

Hi, Ben Goodrich!

Hi, Simon!

I have something

for you.

- You made that for me?

- I did indeed, my little doll.

I think it's gonna be getting cool

pretty soon and you need to have...

a beautiful sweater

just for you.

Hopefully, a good fit.

So, let's see?

Oops!

Oh, my goodness.

Well,

what a very long

piece of yarn.

- He looks like a hobo.

- It's perfect.

Just like you.

Come on.

Blessed is he

whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered.

I said I will confess

my transgressions unto the Lord...

and Thou forgave us

the inequity of my sin.

- The Word of the Lord.

- Thanks be to God.

I'd like to take a few minutes

to discuss some...

of the upcoming activities

on the church calendar.

Here we go.

- What's wrong, Simon?

- Who knows what God thinks  
about current events?

- Does someone have a question?

- Uh, no, sir.

Uh, Your Honor, no...

Father, thank you.

No, sir.

It's always nice to see  
new faces in the congregation.

Uh, I'd like  
to invite them...

to join my wife and children  
and, uh, myself...

for coffee and donuts  
downstairs after the service.

- What does coffee and donuts  
have to do with God?

- Simon Birch, be quiet.

Simon, is there something you'd like  
to share with the rest of us?

I said, "What does coffee and donuts  
have to do with God?"

They're merely refreshments  
so people can socialize and, uh,  
discuss the upcoming activities.

Whoever said that church needs  
a continental breakfast?

- Simon!

- I doubt that God is interested  
in our church activities.

- Simon!

- If God has made the church  
bake sale our priority,  
then I'd say we're all  
in a lot of trouble.

Simon, that is enough!

Children may be excused...

to go to Sunday school.

- Simon?

- Yes, ma'am?

Don't you feel that you owe



Reverend Russell an apology?

- Simon?

- I'm thinking.

Well, you can just sit there  
and think...

until you apologize

to poor Reverend Russell.

Class dismissed.

Joe, dismissed.

- See you later, alligator.

- After a while, crocodile.

- Reverend Russell.

- Go on outside, Joe.

- He didn't mean anything.

- Stop making excuses for him.

If Simon is going to be  
a member of our congregation,  
he has to start behaving  
like a normal person.

- He is a normal person.

- Simon Birch is not a normal person.

Just go on outside, Joe.

Well...

are we, uh, ready  
to apologize?

He's thinking  
about it.

Simon.

What do you think you're doing  
sitting in a corner?

- Thinking about God.

- In a corner?

Faith is not  
in a floor plan.

- Keep him here.

- But for how long?

As long as it takes.

- Mom.

- Hi, honey. Where's Simon?

Didn't your mother  
ever teach you...

how to keep quiet  
during mass?

Tsk. What am I saying?

Of course she didn't.  
Your parents don't go to church,  
do they, Simon?  
See, that's because  
they don't belong here.  
And neither do you.  
Speaking out of turn,  
disrupting the class,  
telling the other children that...  
that God has a special plan for you.  
What kind of nonsense is this?  
And what kind of nonsense is this?

- Hello, Rebecca.

- Come on, Simon.

I was just... No, wait.

I was...

- Out.

- I was teaching him a lesson.

- And what lesson is that?

Humiliation?

- Oh, man, this is so boss.

- This is all my fault.

- Hey, don't take all the credit.

She's my mom.

Telling the children that he's  
some kind of hero. That he's...

- That he's God's instrument.

- And who's to say he isn't?

- Who do you think would win  
in a fight?

- Good question.

Miss Leavey is meaner, but she's  
a smoker. Your mom could outlast her.

We can't have him  
talking that way.

It frightens  
the other children.

Oh, I think it's you  
it frightens, Miss Leavey.

What? Why would I be frightened  
of little Simon Birch?

Because that child has more faith  
than you'll ever know.

- Ahh!

- Oh, goodness gracious.  
Come on, you two.  
Come on, boys.  
Let's go find Ben.  
- My jacket!  
- Oh, that's okay, Simon.  
I'll get it for you.  
Thank you,  
Miss Wentworth.  
You know what, Simon?  
Thank you.  
Strike three!  
You're out, batter.  
October 30, 1964.  
Our team was getting beaten  
badly by Horseshoe Bay.  
This wasn't an altogether  
uncommon occurrence,  
but on this particular day,  
for no particular reason,  
Coach Higgins decided to pack it in,  
so we could all go home.  
It was a decision that would haunt  
the poor man for the rest of his life.  
Simon!  
You're up.  
Come on, Simon. Come on.  
Just make contact with the ball.  
Oh, no.  
Simon, swing away.  
- What?  
- You heard me. Swing the bat.  
- Yes, sir.  
- All right, set 'em up  
and knock 'em down.  
You got it, Simon.  
Pitch this one home.  
Ball... one.  
Simon.  
- Swing the bat.  
- It was too high.  
Come on, Simon.  
You can do it.  
- Send it over the fence.

- Be sure to let go of the bat,  
so you don't go with it.

All right. Let's go.

- Ball... two.

- Simon.

Swing the bat. Swing.

- I'm picking my pitch.

- Ah, for Christ's sakes.

Rebecca!

Sh-She's dead.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

Lord, grant that I may seek more...

to comfort, than to be comforted,

to love, than be loved.

For it is by self-forgetting

that one finds...

Hear our prayers on behalf

of Thy servant, Rebecca.

And grant her entrance

into the land of light and joy,

in the fellowship

of Thy saints.

In sure and certain hope

of the resurrection to eternal life...

through our Lord, Jesus Christ,

we commend our sister, Rebecca.

And we commit her body

to the ground.

Earth to earth,

ashes to ashes.

And dust to dust.

The Lord bless her

and keep her.

Amen.

Mind if I join ya?

Whatcha got there?

Simon's baseball cards.

He gave 'em to me.

I don't get it.

Stupid baseball cards are...

Simon's favorite thing

in the world.

Maybe that's why

he gave them to you.  
I don't want 'em.  
That's a good thing because  
I bet you he wants 'em back.  
- I still don't get it.  
- Maybe it's his way of saying, "Sorry."  
That he still loves you.  
I mean, he's trusting you  
with them, right?  
- So what should I do?  
- I don't know.  
Give him somethin'  
in return?  
Somethin' that he knows  
you want back.  
What's this?  
It's for Simon.  
Make sure he gets it.  
My mother found  
the armadillo.  
- She fainted.  
- For real?  
Just like in the movies.  
Screamed and dropped.  
- Cool.  
- It was pretty boss.  
Here.  
You know, when I first  
saw the bag, I thought that  
maybe the baseball was in it.  
- What? Why?  
- I don't know.  
You did take it,  
didn't you?  
Why would I want to possess  
that fated baseball?  
Well, somebody took  
the ball.  
Who else would want it?  
- Maybe he was there that day.  
- Who?  
Your father.  
Maybe he took the ball.  
I'm sorry, Joe.

- It was out of my hands.  
- What do you mean?  
I'm God's instrument.  
I wish it was someone else.  
- But he wanted it to be me.  
- Simon, it was an accident.  
There are no accidents.  
God has a plan for all of us.  
There's no plan, Simon.  
Don't you understand that by now?  
- But God...  
- There is no God.  
It's like believing  
in Santa Claus or the Easter bunny.  
- It's all bullshit, Simon.  
- Don't say that.  
My mom is dead because  
she got hit by a baseball,  
and you're small because  
you were born a sick baby.  
That's it. Just stop trying  
to make sense of it all. You can't.  
Joe.  
Simon.  
Into paradise...  
may the angels...  
lead you.  
Simon. Simon.  
I hear you.  
What do you want?  
What do you want from me?  
Simon, it's me.  
I thought you were...  
someone else.  
I'm sorry.  
I know.  
Come on. Let's go home.  
Timber-r-r!  
One year good luck.  
One year good luck.  
Oh! Oh, man, that's cold!  
- It's freezing!  
- My balls just turned into prunes.  
My balls just turned

into raisins.

Look!

Come on.

I'll race you to the dock.

Nah, I don't think...

Ready, set, go.

Hey, cheater!

When someone you love dies,  
you don't lose them  
all at once.

You lose them in pieces,  
over time.

Like how the mail  
stops coming.

What I remember most to this day  
was my mother's scent.

And how I hated it  
when it began to disappear.

First from her closets  
and drawers,  
then from her dresses  
she had sewed herself,  
and finally, from her bed sheets  
and pillowcases.

Simon and I never talked much  
about that day on the baseball field.

It was too painful  
for both of us.

For as much as I loved  
my mother,

I knew that Simon loved her  
just as much.

She was the only real mother  
he ever had.

Hi, Grandmother.

Grandmother?

Joe.

Come here.

Sit down.

Your mother was very proud of you.

Do you know that?

She didn't want  
any other children.

Just you.

I'm old, Joe.  
I won't be around forever.  
- Grandmother, don't say that.  
- Shh.  
And when I die,  
there will be no one left  
to look after you.  
So, we have to decide  
what's to become of you.  
What about my father?  
Only your mother knew  
who that was.  
She never even told me.  
Well, what if  
I could find him?  
I mean, if he could just meet me.  
If he knew what I was like.  
You can't think that way.  
You have only yourself  
to depend on now.  
Understand?  
You go wash up.  
I knew then  
that playing the guessing game...  
with Simon wasn't going  
to be enough anymore.  
I no longer just wanted to know  
just who my father was,  
I had to know,  
and I was running out of time.

**Suspect at 2:**

- Mr. Van Gundy?  
- He taught your mother piano, right?  
That was five years ago, Simon.  
I'm 12, remember?  
Oh, yeah. You're kind of small  
for your age, aren't you?  
Suspect sweeping.  
- Mr. Prescott?  
- He always saved the best cuts  
of meat for my mom.  
I don't see how pork chops  
could lead to intercourse,



no matter how good they are.

- Hi, Ben.

- Hey.

- What are you guys doing?

- We were just...

- It's personal.

- Hey, Ben.

- Hey, Bob. How are you?

Hi, Mr. Baker.

Hey, guys. Hi, Joe.

You know, I didn't get a chance  
to talk to you after the funeral.

There were a lot of people.

That's because your mother  
was a very special person.

You need anything,  
just call, okay?

- Okay.

- Okay.

Well, good luck

on your first day of school, guys.

Just give me a holler

if you need anything, Ben.

The office isn't usually  
much help.

Okay, thanks.

I might try out for the swim team  
this year, Mr. Baker.

That's great, Joe.

I'm a swimmer just like you.

I'm just like you.

Hey, either you guys

taking any drama courses this fall?

So, you know what I'm gonna do?

I'm gonna finish off my errands,  
and, uh, if you guys feel like it,  
uh, come say "hi" tomorrow.

Okay? All right.

Bye, Ben.

- He called my mom a special person.

- A "very" special person.

They did spend the night talking  
at the parent-teacher conference.

Why didn't

you mention this before?

It's a parent-teacher conference,  
they're supposed to talk.

Not all night.

Especially with a gym teacher.

What did you think

they were doing?

Discussing your future  
in dodgeball?

Mr. Baker.

Yeah.

Let's go! Let's go!

Keep your legs kicking!

Keep your legs kicking

right to the end!

- Hey, that's great.

That's great. Good work.

Good work, you guys. That's pretty good  
for a first day of practice.

Sean, good work.

Grab a towel.

Terrific!

We'll see you guys tomorrow.

- Fifty-four Mississippi.

- Shh. God, Simon.

- It's a new record.

- News flash. Nobody cares.

I care.

Did you hear that?

- What is it?

- Aah! It's a horse.

Nice dog.

Brutus! Brutus, where are you?

Come on.

It's locked.

- Well, I guess that's that.

Come on. Let's go.

- Wait!

Do you think if I gave you  
a boost, you might be able...

to reach the mail slot

and unlock the door?

- No.

- Oh, come on!

You're always saying that God  
has a special plan for you, right?

- That he made you  
this size for a reason.

- I don't think God's plan...  
includes breaking and entering.

We're not breaking anything!

Come on, please?

- Ow, ow, ow.

- Did you get it?

Ow! Got it! Oh!

It's locked!

Now, let's go!

- Are you crazy?

- I've got to know.

Well, go on.

Well, is it our ball?

Does it say "Tigers"?

Come on, Joe.

What's it say?

- It's-it's not fair.

- Joe?

- Joe!

- It's not fair!

It's not fair.

What the hell's

the matter with you boys?

Baker fail you

in phys ed or something?

- Simon didn't do anything.

This is all my fault.

- I helped you break in.

- No, he didn't.

- You couldn't have done it without me.

- Shut up, will ya?

- Nice try, Joe.

Now, the way that

I figure this,

you can either do hard time

right here in prison,

or you can do

community service.

Community service.

That's what I thought.

And I've already  
called the reverend,  
and he'd be just delighted...  
to have the two of you help him  
with his Junior Lamb's Winter Retreat.  
But that's over  
Christmas break.

Yeah, we don't want to babysit the  
stupid third graders at some dumb camp.  
Fine! I'll just go out there in the  
back room and get your prison uniforms.

- Okay, okay! We'll do it.

- Good.

Now, Joe. I'm gonna call your  
grandmother to come and pick you up.

- Oh, she doesn't drive.

- Well, I've got to have  
somebody pick you two up.

I've only got two men on tonight  
and they're both out in the field.

- What about my parents?

- Joe, do you have any other relatives?

- No, sir.

- Did you call my parents?

Yes, I did.

What did they say?

They said that...

maybe that we should leave you  
here for the night.

I guess they thought  
it might teach you a lesson.

Anyhow, I gotta get  
you guys outta here.

Do you know anybody that might come  
down here at this hour of the night?

- Yeah.

- Who?

Yeah, who?

- Ben?

- Yeah?

- Are you mad?

- No.

Well, baffled,  
but not mad.

I assume you had a good reason  
for doing what you did.

- The reason is that Joe went psycho.
- Shut up, Simon.

That's a good reason as any.

- It is?
- Sure.

Everyone's got to reserve  
the right to go a little nuts  
every now and then.

- Life isn't always so easy.
- Or fair.

Oh, it's certainly not fair.

Hey, you guys want to go get,  
uh, some pizza

or a hot dog or somethin'?

- You want to take us for pizza?

**- Yeah, it's 9:**

It's not that.

It would be like...

rewarding us  
for bad behavior.

- But if you really want to.
- No, Joe.

It wouldn't be right  
to take advantage of Ben like that.

No pizza for us.

Okay.

Ice cream?

So, now I don't know  
if I'll ever find out who my father is.

Maybe she figured  
you weren't ready for the truth.

Ben?

Do you know the truth?

No. I guess your mom was just  
gonna tell me when she was ready.

But if you did know,  
would you tell me?

Yeah.

Yes, I would.

Ben?

Did Miss Wentworth

ever talk about me?  
All the time, Simon.  
Everybody talks about you.  
That's how we keep  
from gettin' bored.  
- Did she tell you about my destiny?  
- Simon!  
What do you mean?  
- I'm going to be a hero.  
- You are?  
Pretty vague job description,  
isn't it?  
- How you gonna do that?  
- I don't know.  
I keep waiting for God  
to show me a sign.  
Like the burning bush  
in the Ten Commandments.  
But I guess he doesn't go in  
for that kind of thing anymore.  
Well, uh, you know,  
you got to be a little patient.  
I have been patient,  
but I'm running out of time.  
Simon, you're  
12 years old!  
You've got all the time  
in the world!  
I don't think so, Ben.  
Time is a monster  
that cannot be reasoned with.  
It responds like  
a snail to our impatience.  
Then it races like a gazelle  
when you can't catch your breath.  
Simon and I were in such a hurry  
to get to the answers at the end...  
of the road that we never took time  
to read the signs along the way.  
How could we have known that everything  
was working together for a reason?  
And so I expect  
each and every one of you...  
will lend a hand

in making this...  
the best Christmas  
pageant ever.  
So, now, are there  
any volunteers for roles,  
- or shall I just choose?  
- Well, I'll play Joseph!  
Good for you, Eddie.  
- Looks like I got the lead.  
- What lead?  
It's the Virgin Mary, Eddie.  
What does Joseph  
have to do with anything?  
All right, now.  
Any volunteers for Mary?  
Beautiful, beautiful  
Mother Mary.  
Mary, Mary, Mary.  
Who will it be?  
Marjorie?  
Would you like to be  
our Mary this year?  
- Yes, ma'am.  
- Good girl!  
All right, now.  
Which one of our...  
future stars  
would like to be the Three Wise Men?  
Three Wise Men.  
Who's it gonna be?  
All right.  
Gary, Allen, Matthew,  
you will be the Wise Men.  
Now let's see what we've got.  
Ah, well, we've got  
the shepherds,  
but they don't have  
a lot to do.  
Miss Leavey  
always tried to downplay...  
the role of the shepherds,  
but we weren't fooled.  
We knew they were the plum roles  
because all you had to do...

was stand around with a staff  
and try not to laugh...  
at the poor saps that got stuck  
with the speaking parts.

All right.

Hands-Hands down. Hands down.

Uh, Joe, Melanie,

Ming, Tommy.

You will be  
our shepherds.

All right.

Now, let's see what's next.

We've got...

Oh, the angel.

Yes, the angel.

The wonderful angel

of the Lord...

suspended high, high above  
everyone else...

the wonderful, magnificent angel  
of the Lord.

- I can't! I'm afraid of heights!

- Well, then, this will be...

the perfect chance  
to face your fears.

- Can't I be a donkey or somethin'?

- You're an angel.

You have your own special pillar  
of light for all the world to see.

- Well, I'll switch with Howard.

- No!

- Yeah!

- I could be Joseph. Joseph does nothing.

- Told ya.

You are going to make  
a wonderful angel, Howard.

- But...

- Thank you.

- Psycho.

- What about me?

Well, Simon, you know what?

- You have the most important  
role of all.

- No.



Without you,  
there would be no play.  
I'm not playing the baby Jesus,  
so just forget it!  
- You're the only one  
who fits into the manger.  
- I won't do it!  
Come on, Simon.  
It'll be fun.  
Easy! It says swaddling clothes.  
Swaddle it!  
Simon, that is so cute!  
I look like a burn victim.  
- You made her laugh.  
- She's laughing at me.  
What's the difference?  
She likes you.  
Everyone likes  
the swaddling baby Jesus.  
- It's great!  
- You really like it? Well, thank you.  
Why does Ming get  
all the girls?  
But, uh, things  
will be different...  
once God makes you  
a hero, right, Simon?  
- Right?  
- Huh?  
Oh, yeah.  
I guess.  
You! You, you, you,  
you, you, you! Okay, okay. Come on.  
So, is everybody ready  
for dress rehearsal?  
- No.  
- What now, Simon?  
What are those?  
- They're turtledoves.  
- They look like  
they're from outer space.  
The audience won't know  
what they are.  
They're doves, Simon!

The audience knows what a dove is!  
They're giant doves!  
They're as big as half a donkey!  
They're actually  
kind of frightening!  
Oh, look what I found  
wandering off. A turtle.  
Oh! A little turtledove! Look at that.  
Oh, so how's  
the rehearsal going?  
Help. Please! I'm gonna strangle him.  
I swear to God! I'm gonna strangle  
that little granite mouse...  
if it's the last thing I do,  
with my bare hands!  
- I'm gonna strangle him!  
I'm a little fragile right now.  
- Simon.  
- Hey!  
- You'll get these back  
after the pageant.  
If you can stop yourself  
from ruining our play.  
Understand?  
Any questions?  
Does God have  
a plan for us?  
I like to think he does.  
Me too! I think God made me  
the way I am for a reason.  
Well, I'm glad that, um,  
that your faith, uh...  
helps you deal  
with your, um,  
you know,  
your-your condition.  
That's not what I mean.  
I think I'm  
God's instrument.  
That He's gonna use me  
to carry out His plan.  
It's wonderful  
to have faith, Simon,  
but, uh,

let's not overdo it.  
God's instrument.  
Hey, kid. You okay?  
- Hey, kid.  
- Hi. What's wrong?  
My dad's makin' me go  
on a retreat tomorrow.  
- Why are you crying?  
- I'm scared of all the other kids.  
They're a lot  
bigger than me.  
- Not all of them.  
- Are you going too?  
And I'll make sure  
nothing happens to you. I promise.  
Now get over there with those other  
flying monkeys where you belong.  
We're turtledoves.  
- You're good with him.  
- Little kids always listen to me...  
because of the way I look.  
- Too bad Marjorie isn't six years old.  
- Not funny!  
The star of Bethlehem  
is not a pinata.  
Marjorie! Marjorie!  
You spit that gum out right now!  
The Virgin Mary  
does not chew gum.  
Where are we going?  
You get down from there!  
Get down from there now!  
It's not safe!  
I've got half a donkey here.  
What good is that gonna do me?  
I need a cigarette.  
Monsters.  
Oh! Oh, hello, Agnes.  
Hello, Reverend. Hi.  
Ah, ready for tonight?  
Absolutely.  
# Miss Leavey's dead #  
# They guillotined her head #  
# We took it from her body #

# And flushed it  
down the potty #  
# And watched it go round and round #  
# And watched it go round and round #  
# And watched it go round and round  
and never saw it go down #  
# Joy to the world  
Miss Leavey's gone #  
- Oh, Agnes.  
- Oh! Oh!  
# She's buried  
in the lawn #  
Thank you.  
Merry Christmas.  
- Merry Christmas to you too.  
- Merry Christmas.  
- Merry Christmas.  
Go, go.  
Be not afraid.  
For I bring you great joy.  
Be not afraid!  
For... F...  
- For...  
- Simon.  
Are you okay?  
For I bring you great...  
joy!  
Oh, man! Oh, man!  
Oh, oh, man!  
Simon, what is it?  
Boobs!  
- Get her, Simon!  
- Holy shit!  
Oh, shit!  
- Let go of me!  
- I'm trying to help!  
- I don't feel so good.  
- If you vomit on this stage,  
I swear I will leave you  
up there...  
- till next Christmas!  
- Hold on!  
Yeah, yeah! Get it!  
I'm gonna kick your ass,

you little perv.

Hey, leave him alone.

Pick on someone your own size.

- Okay.

- Oh!

- I told you this was a bad idea.

- Fight! Fight!

Oh, shit!

I'm gonna honk!

- Oh, no.

- Simon!

Oh, no!

Can I get down now?

Congratulations, Simon.

You've just given us our first  
full-contact Christmas pageant.

Well, do you have  
anything to say?

- Can I have my baseball cards back?

- No you may not!

Oh, Simon.

- What happened tonight?

- I don't know.

Sex makes people crazy.

That may be, uh... That may be true.

But, uh, that is  
no kind of answer.

Simon,

you spend more time sitting  
alone in a corner downstairs...

than you do

with the other children.

You, uh, frighten them

with your stories...

- about being an-an instrument of God.

- They're not stories.

And you interrupt my sermons  
and you refuse to apologize.

I'm out of ideas, Simon.

I can't speak

to your parents because,

well, they don't

attend church.

And I-I can't speak

to Rebecca because...  
because, uh...  
Simon, what I'm trying  
to say is that...  
all of us around here...  
Well, we need a break from you.  
So, once this all simmers down,  
and Marjorie Albright's father  
accepts your apology,  
we'll talk about  
you coming back.  
- What about the retreat?  
- Joe will go alone.  
And it's about time  
I had a talk with him too.  
Simon, I'm sorry.  
but, as the Bible says,  
"There is severe discipline...  
for him who forsakes the Way."  
"To impose a fine  
on a righteous man is not good.  
To flog a noble man  
is wrong."  
Proverb 17, Verse 26. That's, uh,  
very good, Simon.  
But perhaps you know this one

**as well:**

in the heart of a child,  
but the rod of discipline  
drives it far from him."  
- "Good sense makes a man slow to anger,  
- Simon.  
- and it is glory  
to overlook the offense."  
Simon... what do you  
want me to do? Hmm?  
What do you want me to say?  
I want to know that  
there's a reason for things.  
I used to be certain,  
but now I'm not so sure.  
I want you to tell me  
that God has a plan for me.

A plan for all of us.  
Please.  
Simon...  
I can't.  
Okay, you grabbed her boobs  
and ya pulled her into the manger.  
Big deal. It could have  
happened to anybody.  
Well, maybe not anybody.  
Who cares what  
Reverend Russell says, huh?  
Him and his wife, they're the two  
most miserable people we know.  
- You okay?  
- Yeah.  
Where are ya goin'?  
- Home.  
- Why?  
It's Christmas.  
I could go get the bike.  
I'll walk.  
Simon?  
Simon?  
Simon!  
Simon!  
Simon's sick.  
- How sick?  
- He's just sick, all right?  
But I've gotta see him  
before I leave on the retreat.  
You can see him  
when you get back.  
But can't I just come in  
and see him for a couple seconds?  
Go on, now.  
Simon's sick.  
- I know.  
- So was I when I heard  
what he did last night.  
The whole town's  
talkin' about it.  
What a little screwup.  
Hey! Your son is not a screwup.  
He's a hero.

What the hell  
are you talking about?  
I said he's a hero.  
And you don't deserve him.  
I want you to know that.  
... six, seven,  
eight, nine,  
- ten, eleven,  
- Thank you. And God bless you.  
twelve...  
Uh, is that it?  
- We're one short.  
- Is that  
supposed to be a joke?  
Have fun. Okay?  
- Please tell me you're coming.  
- I just came to say good-bye.  
But what are you  
gonna do without me?  
Well, first, I'm gonna sneak  
into Reverend Russell's office  
and get my baseball cards back.  
Sounds like trouble.  
Sorry I'm gonna miss it.  
Well, I bet you boys are going  
to be very sad to know that...  
Miss Leavey has taken  
a leave of absence.  
She's going to spend some time  
with her mother in Connecticut.  
Okay, Joe. Let's go.  
Simon, you should be home resting.  
You better go.  
Yeah.  
- So, uh, I'll see ya  
in a couple days, right?  
- Sure.  
- Get better, okay?  
- Okay.  
I wish I could  
remember every detail of that weekend.  
Even now, I'll sometimes sit  
and try to remember the colors,  
the sounds, the faces.



But it only comes back to me  
in bits and pieces.  
If only I had known,  
I would have paid closer attention.  
But you're never prepared for  
the moment that changes your life.  
Whoa. Hey. Hey, you okay?  
Yeah.  
- Take it slow.  
- You're very good with them, Joe.  
You should see Simon.  
He's the one they really listen to.  
Don't tell me you miss him  
already. It's only been one day.  
- He's my best friend.  
- Yes, I know.  
Gotcha!  
- Miss Wentworth.  
And how did you end up...  
with Simon Birch  
as your best friend?  
I don't know. Maybe it's because we both  
know how it feels to be an outsider.  
Teased or...  
whispered about.  
- They tease you?  
- Yeah, you know, the Wentworth bastard,  
and stuff like that.  
Well, people-people can be  
very unforgiving at times, Joe, uh...  
I'm sorry.  
- Joe!  
- Looks like somebody needs me.  
Joe.  
You can talk to me...  
anytime.  
God, no wonder  
she kept it such a secret.  
You're sure we're doin'  
the right thing, huh, Simon?  
We promised him, Ben.  
You promised him too, remember?  
You're right. I did.  
Reverend Russell?

Reverend?

Uh... I need the keys...

to the kitchen.

Reverend?

A lefty.

Just like me.

What do you mean?

I met your mother 13 years ago.

I was coming to Gravestown  
to interview at the church.

- No.

- She was going to the city to  
buy a present for her mother.

Stop it.

I'd never seen anyone like her, Joe.

And I fell in love.

- Right there on  
the Boston and Maine.

- Joe! Joe!

Simon.

Did you hear what he said?

He's lying, right?

Joe...

Joe!

Let him go, Reverend.

Joe.

Joe.

A bastard.

I wish I never knew.

I wish I'd never found out.

- I must sound like a baby, huh?

- No.

- Big goddamn baby.

- No, you don't.

- I wish I could go home again.

- I know.

Back to the way things were.

I know, pal.

I guess Simon's gonna ride  
on the bus with Joe.

- He'll be all right.

- Ben, it was a mistake.

I wanted to take care of her,  
but she said she didn't need that.

- Well, that sounds  
a lot like Rebecca to me.  
- Yeah.  
Haunts me every day  
of my life.  
Wish I could take it back. I...  
I just wish it never happened.  
Well, there's a beautiful kid over there  
who wouldn't be here if it hadn't.  
Ben?  
... eleven,  
- twelve,  
- and he ranks thirteen.  
- Hey, you came.  
- I told you I'd be here. Come on.  
Up we go.  
Thanks.  
You okay?  
You okay?  
I was thinking.  
Maybe this was  
your destiny.  
To help me find my father.  
Yeah. Maybe.  
- Come on. Give it back.  
- You started it!  
Calm down, guys.  
Watch out!  
Oh, God!  
- I can't... I can't stop it!  
I can't stop it!  
- Oh, good Lord.  
- Oh, no!  
- Oh, my God!  
Oh, good Lord!  
Reverend Russell!  
I can't sw- I can't swim!  
Hey, where are you going?  
Come back.  
Okay, everybody, just stay calm.  
Okay. We're going to get out of here.  
Hey, come on. Calm down.  
Just listen to me.  
Stop it!

I'm not going to let anything  
happen to any of you. Understand?  
Now, the current is very strong.  
So I'll take you to Joe... one at  
a time, and Joe will help you on shore.

- Go!

- Okay.

You first, now you.

You're after him.

Don't worry. It'll be okay.

I got you.

Now, you. Come on.

Let's go. You're next.

Well, that's it. Come on.

Simon, let's go.

Wait. We're missing one.

Simon!

Joe!

My foot's stuck.

I'm scared.

Hang on.

- Aah!

- Come on. I got ya.

Come on, Stuart.

It's okay.

I got him.

- Where's Simon?

- He's inside. I'll get him.

- No, no! Let me.

- Simon!

Get him. Get him, Joe.

Pull him through the window.

Pull him out, Joe.

- Joe!

- Simon!

- No, no, no, Simon!

Simon!

Let me.

Simon!

Joe!

Simon!

Simon!

Okay, Joe.

Keep his head above the water.

- Get 'em up to the road.  
- What about Joe?  
We got him. Joe!  
Come with me, boys.  
Here. Down here.  
Here. Hurry!  
Come on.  
Come here, children.  
Come on. Come on.  
Come on.  
Come on.  
Come on, Joe.  
Simon.  
Don't leave me.  
I want to see Simon.  
Father Russell,  
I'll see you on Sunday.  
He's got a visitor.  
Simon...  
I heard what you did  
for those kids.  
The whole town's  
talking about it.  
I just wanted  
you to know...  
that I think what you did...  
was really brave.  
And you're a hero,  
Simon Birch.  
Jesus, Simon,  
you look like shit.  
Hey.  
Hey.  
Are the kids okay?  
Yeah.  
They all made it?  
Even Stuart.  
Did you see how  
the children listened to me...  
because of the way I looked?  
Yeah.  
That window  
was just my size.  
Extra small.

Extra, extra small.  
That was  
over 200 Mississippi.  
Nobody likes a showoff.  
Promise me.  
Yeah.  
- You'll take my baseball cards.  
- No.  
Take them and share them  
with Ben. Please?  
Okay. I promise.  
Simon?  
Yeah.  
You're the best friend  
I ever had.  
I know that, stupid.  
- Joe?  
- Yeah.  
I got to go now.  
Okay.  
See you later, alligator.  
Timber-r-r!  
One year good luck.  
Winter left its icy chill behind.  
And soon it was spring  
and summer again.  
Grandmother passed away  
that June...  
following a stroke.  
And because Hildie was always  
so content to just follow her lead,  
she had a stroke of her own  
and died in July.  
We buried them  
side by side.  
It's the way  
they would have wanted it.  
Ben Goodrich legally  
adopted me...  
just two days  
before my 13th birthday.  
Not a day goes by that I don't  
thank God for bringing him into my life.  
With Simon's help,

I'd finally found my real father.  
There is a prayer  
I say for Simon Birch.  
It's the same prayer  
that he said at my mother's grave...  
that night I found him  
in the darkness.  
Into paradise...  
may the angels lead you.

Dad?

Dad! I'd love to stay here  
in the graveyard all day,  
but I've got a game, remember?

Okay, Simon.

I'm coming.

You know, I was just thinking  
about that.

Last year, you played  
in the squirt league, right?

- Yeah. So?

- This year you're a peewee.

So, what do they want you to do,  
play soccer or urinate?

Anyway...

I was just thinking.