

made a rupture; I've shone light into dark places and thus brought shame upon my family; I have told the truth, which may indeed set you free, but not without the price of betrayal. You cannot sing your ancestors' songs as they intended them to be sung, as they would have phrased them themselves. If you choose to sing them at all, you will betray your forebears, because you will never understand them as they'd wish to be understood.

This "betrayal" is life giving; it is a condition of truth telling; it is a condition of actual aliveness, which requires emotional honesty with oneself—without that, what on earth is this life? The alternative is silence, a frozen politeness, a fake life. I suppose that being emotionally honest with oneself doesn't necessitate writing a book about it—but for me it has always been the written word that enters where speech cannot, that shapes what would otherwise remain oppressively inchoate. Did I need to publish that book while my father was still alive? I seem to have needed to do so, perhaps simply because of the hungry child in me who wanted to be *seen*.

And, like any artist, when I've made something I believe to be beautiful, what is one to do with it but give it to someone?

If there is a meaning to be taken from this, it is that art cannot be counted on to mend the rifts within or without. Its work is to take us to the brink of clarity. Joy Williams writes, "The writer writes to serve—hopelessly he writes in the hope that he might serve—not himself and not others, but that great cold elemental grace that knows us." Clarity, whether we'd ever have wished for it or not, is a genuine thing. And any instance of the genuine, no matter how discomfiting, and though it may not seem like it at all, is something to be grateful for.

I am used to it, my father's silence, and his silence is a burning in which I reside. In my worst moments I think, Well, now I have no parents. Then I think, I never did. Then I think, Yes, I did, there were moments of affirmation, there were lessons in beauty and making, there were instances of instruction in which I was shown those things that have sustained my life. Both are true. There's the rub, the caught in-between-ness of it. I don't care anymore what my father thinks, and I am to some degree crippled by his response. I don't want his presence or his absence. I am proud of my book, and I wouldn't change a word of it. I wish I'd never written it. No, I don't. Yes, I do. No, I don't.

Brian Doyle

BRIAN DOYLE is the editor of *Portland Magazine* at the University of Portland, in Oregon—the best university magazine in America, according to *Newsweek*, and "the best spiritual magazine in the country" according to Annie Dillard. Boyle is the author of five collections of essays, two nonfiction books (including *The Grail*, about a year in an Oregon vineyard), and a new collection of "proems" called *Epiphanies & Elegies*. His books have three times been finalists for the Oregon Book Award, and his essays have appeared in *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Orion*, and in newspapers around the world. His essays have also been reprinted in four *Best American Essays* anthologies. He is contributing essayist to *The Age* newspaper and *Eureka Street* magazine in Australia.

A couple leaped from the south tower, hand in hand. They reached for each other and their hands met and they jumped. Jennifer Brickhouse saw them falling, hand in hand.

Many people jumped. Perhaps hundreds. No one knows. They struck the pavement with such force that there was a pink mist in the air.

The mayor reported the mist.

A kindergarten boy who saw people falling in flames told his teacher that the birds were on fire. She ran with him on her shoulders out of the ashes.

Tiffany Keeling saw fireballs falling that she later realized were people. Jennifer Griffin saw people falling and wept as she told the story. Niko Winstral saw people free-falling backwards with their hands out, as if they were parachuting. Joe Duncan on his roof on Duane Street looked up and saw people jumping. Henry Weintraub saw people "leaping as they flew out." John Carson saw six people fall, "falling over themselves, falling, they were somersaulting." Steve Miller saw people jumping from a thousand feet in the air. Kirk Kjeldsen saw people flailing on the way down, people lining up and jumping, "too many people falling." Jane Tedder saw people leaping and the sight haunts her at night. Steve Tamas counted fourteen people jumping and then he stopped counting. Stuart DeHann saw one woman's dress billowing as she fell, and he

saw a shirtless man falling end over end, and he too saw the couple leaping hand in hand.

Several pedestrians were killed by people falling from the sky. A fireman was killed by a body falling from the sky.

But he reached for her hand and she reached for his hand and they leaped out the window holding hands.

The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, wrote John the Apostle, and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

I try to whisper prayers for the sudden dead and the harrowed families of the dead and the screaming souls of the murderers but I keep coming back to his hand and her hand nestled in each other with such extraordinary ordinary succinct ancient naked stunning perfect simple ferocious love.

There is no fear in love, wrote John, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment.

Their hands reaching and joining are the most powerful prayer I can imagine, the most eloquent, the most graceful. It is everything that we are capable of against horror and loss and death. It is what makes me believe that we are not craven fools and charlatans to believe in God, to believe that human beings have greatness and holiness within them like seeds that open only under great fires, to believe that some unimaginable essence of who we are persists past the dissolution of what we were, to believe against such evil hourly evidence that love is why we are here.

Their passing away was thought an affliction, and their going forth from us utter destruction, says the Book of Wisdom, but they are in peace. They shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble.

No one knows who they were: husband and wife, lovers, dear friends, colleagues, strangers thrown together at the window there at the lip of hell. Maybe they didn't even reach for each other consciously, maybe it was instinctive, a reflex, as they both decided at the same time to take two running steps and jump out the shattered window, but they did reach for each other, and they held on tight, and leaped, and fell endlessly into the smoking canyon, at two hundred miles an hour, falling so far and so fast that they would have blacked out before they hit the pavement near Liberty Street so hard that there was a pink mist in the air.

I trust I shall shortly see thee, John wrote, and we shall speak face to face.

Jennifer Brickhouse saw them holding hands, and Stuart DeHann saw them holding hands, and I hold on to that.

Tony Earley

TONY EARLEY, an MFA in creative writing from the University of Alabama, has been named one of the "twenty best young fiction writers in America" by *The New Yorker* and one of the "Best of Young American Novelists" by *Granta*. His books include a collection of short stories, *Here We Are in Paradise: Stories*; a novel, *Jim the Boy*; and a collection of essays, *Somehow Form a Family: Stories That Are Mostly True*. His stories have also appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *Esquire*, and *The Best American Short Stories*. His work has been widely anthologized and translated into many languages. The Samuel Milton Fleming Chair in English, Earley has taught at Vanderbilt University since 1997.

In July 1969, I looked a lot like Opie in the second or third season of *The Andy Griffith Show*. I was a small boy with a big head. I wore blue jeans with the cuffs turned up and horizontally striped pullover shirts. I was the brother in a father-mother-brother-sister family. We lived in a four-room house at the edge of the country, at the foot of the mountains, outside a small town in North Carolina, but it could have been anywhere.

On one side of us lived Mr. and Mrs. White. They were old and rich. Their driveway was paved. Mrs. White was the president of the town garden club. When she came to visit Mama she brought her own ashtray. Mr. White was almost deaf. When he watched the news on television, it sounded like thunder in the distance. The Whites had an aluminum travel trailer in which you could see your reflection. One summer they hitched it to their Chrysler and pulled it all the way to Alaska.

On the other side of us lived Mack and Joan. They had just graduated from college. I thought Joan was beautiful, and still do. Mack had a bass boat and a three-tray tackle box in which lurked a bristling school of lures. On the other side of Mack and Joan lived Mrs. Taylor, who was old, and on the other side of Mrs. Taylor lived Mr. and Mrs. Frady, who had a fierce dog. My sister, Shelly, and I called it the Frady dog. The Frady dog lived a long and bitter life. It did not die until well after I had a driver's license.