

Family, Home.

"They were supposed to call by now. Margie said they would call by 2:00PM to submit an offer. Why haven't they called?" She was rambling. "Even they won't buy this haunted how?" *more urgency?*
? - not sure if a period is enough
The hanging wall clock opened its mouth to retire the blue jay ** how* *ka-kooing* into the dining room.

It was only 2:06. *So this is inanimate action →*
So maybe it could be set off in italics or something? *not sure if Blue Jays ka-kaa, maybe*
"This house isn't haunted to them. They just don't think it has aged well," I replied as her *jeering?*

nervous knuckles tapped at the tablecloth. *smile* *Oh love this.*
Mom gave me a glance, not letting up with her flick tick flicks of the cloth. I wasn't wrong. She had to see that. The plaster walls were cracking from the floor up. Pipes lay exposed, painted the same neutral beige as the walls to hide their openness. *apparentness?* Paint chipped off the porch deck through the windows, new to the sills they sat in. Our chairs were creaking as we adjusted closer to the table's edge, a cellphone between us and silence. *beautiful* *creaked?*

Silence. 2:10PM.

"I don't like this silence." Flick tick flick tick goes the mumbling lady. *I love it though.* *I'm interested in your choice to use italics here. It seems like an poetic aside so naturally I understand your wanting to set it off.*

"The silence is fine," quiet was better between us, I thought —

"No, no it's not. We used to talk more."

She stopped the tapping and wrapping, and she waited. Every mother says they used to talk to their sons more. We are no different. If I just wait out the phone call...after an eternity, that's when I'll answer. Just hover over the phone.

"What do you want to talk about then?" I know this is my doing. I'm sorry for that, but this is what we need to do. *this line is a little confusing* *Wrap or rap?*

"Why are you making me sell my house?" *Wrap, tap, wrap no more she means to say.*

No smoking in the house. *what if you set this off in all caps? like a sign or something?*

How can I focus with no cigarette? Of course I want to sell the house. How can I focus sleep — in this house that has no fucking smoking and my brother's ghost in it? Margie is late, and that elderly

So powerful

FUCK YES

couple with the handful of grandkids still hasn't called. Turn back all ye who gaze upon the crescent driveway and believe it perfect for the two cars and the basketball hoop for the grandsons. They come on the weekends to ^{soak up} ~~soak in~~ the lingering ^{life?} ~~death~~ of their aging grandparents. ^{thrilled at each loose footed} ~~Thrilled at each loose footed~~ step up the stairs, hoping that you go crashing down and that they never have to return again to this place that smells of bath soap and must. ~~brilliant.~~

"I don't know why. I figure this place makes us unwell is all. Margie's late."

This house isn't the one my younger brother, Peter, died in, ^{b its} ~~But it is~~ where we grew up. The large oak we'd climb out front. ^{could be all of the above.} The front porch where we'd fix bikes, drink teas, and talk to friends — gone now that he is. ^{over?} We had the stump pulled years ago, and the rail is scattered ~~throughout~~ the lawn.

Splinters, lying in wait, face up on the deck. When he died it was only natural for his ghost to return

here. He must've been ecstatic to finally pass — make nights sleepless, ^{burdened} ~~burdening~~, weightful. ^{heavy?}

The front door. Thank God. Praise to the all powerful Margie, deity hailing from Cincinnati.

^{opens? & damned?} Save me the trouble and unroute this doomed woman from dragging me layers deep with her. ^{fucking love this}

^{dislodge?} "Unwell?" ^{at} She looked across ~~to me~~ "This is where our fondest memories of him lie." ^{sounds like the brain, love it.}

With him. ^{formatting for impact.}

"More Peter talk?" Margie asked ~~at~~ from the living room. She, herself, was sitting on a throne of deceit for undoubtedly she has partnered with this other woman and Hades. ^{not sure}

(Her work having been accomplished, Margie feels the tension given off by our protagonist and exits through the front door for a smoke of her own. lucky bitch.) ^{seems to be the same role as the inanimate consciousness.}

"Your brother will always be with you." Strange — I think ~~to myself~~ as she mutters on. I was convinced I had seen this episode before. "...that is the burden of loss."

"Well could he not be?" ^{So powerful.}

Thwap! In disbelief, I watched as my cigarette fell to the table, her hand streaking across my cheek. "I nearly forgot. No smoking. Sorry." That must be why.

he's always with you because you need to be reminded how he died?

"Besides, I don't believe you..." Wording, wording. "The only other place he knew to come was here. Same as us."

He didn't stay in ~~that~~ ^{the} house he died in because the drunkard there left no open rooms in home or heart for the ghost of a boy he didn't love. Pete's bed had been discarded, used for firewood. We took his clothes and get-well-soon cards with us. ^{Solid a} He must've ^{stripped down?} thought to come with us. Why'd you think that? ^{*Needs a little work.} ^{@ something not quite right here.}

"This pain will always be with you, Josh. Reconcile with it." Now we're a wise old pill-popper, mom? Don't speak. ^{-Damn.}

"Now we're a wise old grieving pill-popper?" No God or realtor is stopping me now. "He wouldn't do that to me. I loved him. As long as I'm in this fucking house, my life is ruined. As long as he is in this fucking house, ^{and} I'm convinced that he will always be in this house." Josh rose up out of the chair, slammed both hands on the table and hunched forward to ensure both his yelling and demeanor made her feel small. ^{inanimate consciousness} Shame on you. This is your mother. He continues.

"If he loves me he would know he can't come everywhere with me. I can't take that pain. How is that fair? Always sleepless nights? Always crying at burdened bleak shadows? I'm scared of the dark here with these lingering memories and this phantom brother, ^{that} that can't come with me everywhere." Rambling, Josh you're rambling. Shouting. Sweltering. "Not if he loves me. He wouldn't do that."

Someone call the phone, please. It's sitting under my husk. Keep me from hurting this woman who birthed me. ^{Margie?} Marge come back inside if you will. I'm sorry I mocked ^{like the city is a quality?} your Cincinnati or doubted your divinity. Save me from this woman and her delusions. Irrational phantoms that torture those they loved? ^{she's} She is wrong. He must only know this place. ^{hell is a place and a state of mind.}

Trembling, clenched fist, racing thoughts. Josh has now begun the regression to his infant state.

That's it. Act more like a child. Hide from all of this. Soon you will be a toddler if you keep this up.

Then infant, oh joy. Remember the days of rolling on the floor and shitting yourselves? ^{when} There was no younger brother to burden you like this, you happy boy. Finally, for good measure, I will retreat back

^{& we'll have to reconcile this.}

** Just a thought?*

** Surely not the hysterical one glaring at me through flooded eyes*

into the womb. But whose womb? Not the irrational parent across me now crying, surely Margie's?

*Fucking
Love
this.*

Useless realtor still isn't inside the house stopping this child's tirade. God's womb? Will God herself take me back? No. No. The phantom is certain to be with God.

*→ This is all about
Ulysses meets Maelstrom -
Side.*

"Josh!" A scream is heard across the table. Distant voice where have I heard you before? I'm

sorry but you must be quiet. You're interrupting you see.

→ could there be more action here?

Shakes

*Give the scream some
resistance in space.*

"Josh!" A strange earthquake ~~is shaking~~ me from top to bottom.

Peter, look at the problems you've instilled in me. A man should never have to choose between

I don't like this line. Needs more.

his house and the womb. He is meant to leave one ~~to~~ another permanently. You have placed me in a

could we assign possession to one entity?

limbo, scared of either. They'll think I'm unwell for feeling unwelcome in ~~the~~ the two sacred places in

dropped?

this world. *both?* I am unfit to move from this house. I have forsaken ye Lord and attempted to abandon the

fond memories of one Saint Peter.

this may be the best line in the piece.

Josh's punishment is to stay here and live with this burden.

*→ Mocking I think you
could do more
here.*

"No! Return me to the Earth! Make me no more; pre-promethian. I will live in a dark so long as

that dark is not here in this home!" Josh is screaming. He wants the earth mother to hear his screams

and know he is not delusional. She hears him, but she agrees with the Lord. Josh decides he must cast

them both out of his heart for they are foolish.

-Great!

"YOU ARE FALSE GODS!"

Shaking. Shaking. Earthquake. Earth mother.

The cigarette fell loose from his lips. She was crying. Lost in his thoughts of an irrational mother and cruel God, he had begun smoking in the house again.

"No smoking in the hous-" Hug her you cruel infantile boy.

No. She wins if we embrace, mother and child.

A young boy coming to terms with his pain and opening his heart to grieve the loss of his

brother. Surely you can think of no better way to experience defeat?

*→ We'll need to approach
this a bit.*

*Why is his mother the issue? Is it
because she created BOTH brothers?*

*So relinquishing yourself to her would equal defeat because
she, and the house, ~~is~~ the womb from which these phantoms
originate?*

— let's work on this one.

Wet cheeks, too? Sobbing? Have I lost myself in search of who is at fault for this pain I have?

This irreconcilable pain has removed my mind from my child's duties. I have made my mother cry. *— hard hitting*

Do you remember posting Margie's sign in the front yard and welcoming the freedom of escape it brought with it? Did your mother feel that same sense of freedom? Have ~~heard~~^{her} nights been restless, too? *a little wordy*

Surely ~~she~~^{she} grieves, but I have lived in fear. *needs more emphasis.*

You have been a wallowing child. Hug your mother, break bread with her and your gods and your brother's ghost. *✓ love this*

"Mom. I'm sorry." He said with clarity. She embraced the tender child before her.

You are released from the prison of adulthood. She is here for you. Be glad. Let her keep her home and her memories.

sing songy → reminded.

Yes. Yes. Yes. I have strayed from the light. It was I who was delusional. ** inanimate consciousness?* "Ye who stray from the path of everlasting light have only ~~the~~^{thy} self to blame." Peter will be with me everywhere I go. Not as a monster. He is a mote of light in a world gone bleak. Return me, Earth mother, to the world story. I am ready to be her child once more, and his brother once more. I am sane. *— love* *so powerful*

The phone had finished ringing and neither the mother nor son had reached for it. *needs work.*

Mother. You have a strange sobbing face of horror. She is taken aback by my revelation made these past fifteen minutes that the Petersons were late to call.

Cry not mother. Worry not. I am sane once more. We are free.

Oh Josh! What can I say other than. WOW!
There's so much happening in this piece that I want to explore with you. Thank you so much for sharing your story with me. ♥ -Tay