

Anglin

He'd failed. There was no way around it and he didn't much care to find one. The failure itself didn't bother him, but it was grating that *he* would come to be seen as one. The association of action and identity had always unnerved him.

He had no particular affinity for architecture anyway. It was simply one of many of the well-traveled list of Respectable Professions. The only reason he'd followed this path over, for example, that of a surgeon's, was its function as a punchline for an over-a-decade-long joke.

When he was nine years old, his family had played host to a friend from the city. The man was responsible for designing many banks and one library. At the dining room table his parents told him what the guest's job entailed, to which he, with perfect comic timing, remarked: "What a coincidence, I'm in buildings all the time!"

It was the first time he had made a room laugh, beyond the slapstick of infant years, and he had carried his wit with pride ever since.

His girlfriend, for her part, was utterly humorless. Katy had often remarked that his affinity for laughter was a defensive reflex. He vehemently opposed the notion, despite knowing it may give the theory credence.

Their biggest rift, however, was on the matter of Suffering. He had, in the past few years, come to embrace the notion that to be good was to suffer least, whereas Christendom had left her haunted with faith in its redemptive qualities.

The birth of his aversion could be traced back to his first trip home from school. He'd never liked the city much, and had been longing to leave. After all, he was only there to please his parents who, despite not showing any outward distaste for local customs, believed it was of utmost importance for a young man to know urban landscapes.

Pleasantries were cut short by the early morning discovery of a tractor tipped on its side. The neighbor's son, a frequent co-conspirator during the student's teenage years, had been out in the fields before sunrise. Short-sighted and presumably hungover, he maneuvered the lumbering machine into a ditch, awkwardly stumbling out before he was crushed under its weight as it lurched off loose ground.

Though the student's younger brother was first on the scene, he himself would later claim to have made the discovery, evocatively describing the blood caked against soil, how it would have been indistinguishable from the clay-rich mass had it been found before the sun could blacken it.

"If it can all end like this, I'd rather not waste my time hurting," he concluded, though there were presumably better lessons to be learnt from his old friend's misfortune.

It had been six whole days since his exam results had inconspicuously been pinned to a cork board and he had talked to no one. Despite frequent check-ins from Katy and family, he'd found it surprisingly easy to turn off his phone and apartment lights.

A park bench was translated into home, a luxury that the modest summer permitted. The pigeons, children, and their young mothers felt much more welcoming and had become frequent guests in his dreams.

He liked it better, felt like God there; eyes lazily swarmed by little lives. It was true, however, that he'd started to feel ashamed. Not of hubris, but of the lie at the heart of this feeling. He couldn't imagine God having preferences. Of which he had many.