

Choose Your Own Belief: Of Sharks, Art, & God

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Introduction

Since *hope is a thing with feathers that perches in the soul,*
Then, belief is the feather vane
holding it together.

And what you believe may be what I know
or, the other way around.
Maybe we don't believe at all.

Chapter I

Sharks are evil
which is why you will never swim with them—
especially not while caged—
where in a moment of weakness, you might dare open your eyes
only to meet up close a steely one of theirs
as they stealth-swim inches from your prison
and you forfeit a piece of your soul.

*If you believe, go on to Chapter II
If not, go directly to Chapter IX*

Chapter II

When we finally
evolve
to access the other two thirds of our brain
the human race will actually begin to
devolve.

Until then
equality among us remains a dream
governed by Hypnos from his ebony bed in Hades,
sprinkled by Mr. Sandman, who is probably wearing a letterman's jacket,
and captured in the BFG's jar for safekeeping.

So for now
education is both your life force and poison.

If you believe, go on to Ch. III

If not, skip to Ch. V

Chapter III

Even though you will never really give up Diet Coke
you still believe in yourself on the whole

so you

Keep stopping at parks to swing
Keep talking to your children (who are eating chicken and rice) about
current events
Keep dreaming of the art scene in Seattle
Keep dreaming of life in NYC where you've only visited, but know you belong
Keep vacuuming the house even when no one is coming over

Keep studying Psalms and Mosiah for clues
Keep questioning “truth”
Keep reading poetry in place of therapy
Keep selfishly teaching the art of communication to one day master it yourself
Keep spending more time alone
Keep finding babies in your dreams

Go on to Ch. IV

Chapter IV

You want to

see more

read more

write more

sky.

If you agree, go to Ch. V

If not, skip to Ch. VI

Chapter V

You live in a world where President Trump is fact and the world of Harry Potter is fiction. You believe the opposite.

If you're for Trump, go back to Ch. I

If you're for HP, go on to Ch. VI

Chapter VI

Believing in people feels a little bit like not knowing whether the eventual, promised drop on your rafting trip is a three-foot dip over a gurgly rapid, or a fifty foot, cataractous plunge of body-swallowing doom.

But you still do.

You believe in them, because, for example, you think there's a researcher out there, who has discovered the cure for cancer, and keeps it from the world, carrying her burden alone. She has decided to protect us from it, because the method for the cure is more horrific than the disease.

Thank you. (You're sorry.)

If you think it might be true, go on to Ch. VII

If not, go to Ch. IX

Chapter VII

You don't believe
 that this is all there is—
 this one life—
 the last ounce of water on a desert hike
 the last seventh grader picked during PE square dancing
 or even the last time you saw the one you were never supposed to love.

No,
 there is more—
 an alternate universe where
 Michael Jackson's secret children

spend their days choreographing and performing
brilliant art
you might never see.

And that's just the beginning of
more.

Believers go on to Ch. VIII
Non-believers, The End

Chapter VIII

Trees talk to each other
through their root systems.

Whether old
deep and intricate
as the wrinkles on a centurion's face
or new
weak and growing
like the fingers of a newborn's hand

they talk.

With vibrations they stir their ocean of dirt
sending waves we can't feel to trees in other lands.

They praise their Creators
and they sing
of oxygen and water and sun.

They whisper stories
about predators
like us.

It's happening underneath you.

Move on to Ch. IX

Chapter IX

God is

Heavenly Mother,
who, pregnant with her Earth belly
liked you even when you were thirteen
and Heavenly Father,
who you have pictured all your life resting on a throne
but you know now is more active than that
and the Holy Spirit,
who sometimes settles behind your ribcage
and fills you from the center outward with liquefied light,
and your brother, Jesus Christ,
who took one for the whole team
and yet somehow would walk just you home
carrying your backpack, as you hop over sidewalk cracks.

They are
one word.

Either way, The End