Immanuel left for Princeton after his high school graduation, hoping to make his first excursion from the stifling heat of the Louisiana South. He graduated a year earlier than the rest of his class, and was gone a week later, Mother cried incessantly the day he left, but Immanuel tried not to look, Immanuel didn’t want to break in front of his mother.

“You know I have to go, mom, It’s not forever.”

Mother wiped her tears with her bare hands. “I can’t believe you’re actually doing this, I’ll be so worried about you.”

He smiled and hugged her firmly, “There’s nothing to be worried about, I love you, I’ll call you when I get there.”

Immanuel kept his promise and called that night. Mother kept her promise as well, and was still worried. For the rest of that year, mother beckoned Immanuel to make a permanent return to Louisiana, which meant taking classes at Louisiana State with his father. He didn’t want to be known as “Dr. Crowder’s kid” anymore. He would not go back. Too many things were left unsaid, unfinished, and undone.

Easter break drew closer the second year. Mother called twenty minutes before his weekly meeting with Dr. Jones. Immanuel became incensed at the proposition that he return home instead of working with Dr. Jones, a friend of his father. The conversation was rushed from the beginning, which made the environment harsh and impatient. As mother implored him to come home yet again, the tones became inharmonious.

“No, I won’t do it. I have to work on some things. Dr. Jones and I are writing a paper together. I’m sorry, I can’t do that right now.”

Mother started in her usual fashion, using the rhetorical device that Immanuel had come to know with perfect clarity, “Look, your father wants to see you. You shouldn’t hurt him like this. He’s been wanting to see you for a long time.”

Immanuel felt the pressure rise. The air became loose and unsaturated, as if he could not get enough oxygen with each swallow of air. “And you care about what father feels? Do you? You sit there in that house and hold him in contempt every time he comes near you. You care nothing for him, Dad is coming here for a lecture series soon and I’ll see him then, but I’m not coming home.”

When father arrived in Princeton, Immanuel jotted down a list of things to do in his notebook—early lunch, and then take a walk around campus. Immanuel and his father were too busy discussing their respective interests to their sweaty backs, “So Manny, I hear father is coming to Princeton. Shall we sit down together, May I ask what it’s about?”

“He didn’t tell you?” Immanuel asked.

“He just mentioned it in passing.”

“Well, it’s about the virtues. I’m arguing to show that beauty to other people.”

Father became interested in the topic, since he had been interested in analytic metaphysics and epistemology on his father’s favorite topic for over an hour. He carried it with him everywhere. He recited the dialogue from Wittgenstein when he was a graduate student, in careful anticipation of a great lecture series.

“Dad, I’m looking forward to the lecture series here at Princeton. It’s not going to be at all like these things are old farts, which I can see and contemplated the heavens for a moment in totally reverence, waiting for the next few words, that’s not all we’re men only for other philosophers.” It had just said. It was true. Immanuel spoke, But most people don’t even understand how you have to do with making lives better? Father put his hand on Immanuel’s shoulder, squeezing to emphasize his point. “Manny, what you do, doesn’t make people’s lives better. You do it for truth persuades others to do likewise, a philosopher’s work that makes him great, that is to show that beauty to other people. That’s proven again in empty agreement, “Of course I do know...
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When father arrived in Princeton, Immanuel had made preparations, They were to eat an early lunch, and then take a walk around the campus, The day was nice, though hot, but Immanuel and his father were too busy discussing philosophy to notice the shirts sticking to their sweaty backs, "So Manny, I hear from Dr. Jones that you two are writing a paper together, May I ask what it's about?"

“He didn't tell you?” Immanuel asked.

“He just mentioned it in passing.”

“Well, it's about the virtues. I'm arguing that doing the right thing is good for its own sake.”

Father became interested in the topic, since previously Immanuel had only taken an interest in analytic metaphysics and epistemology for most of his time at Princeton. They spoke on his father's favorite topic for over an hour, discussing the distinction between internal and external goods, and Aristotle's Ethics, which was father's favorite book. It was a gift from Wittgenstein when he was a graduate student at Oxford. Father loved the book, and carried it with him everywhere. He recited it to Immanuel while he was still in his mother's womb, in careful anticipation of a great life to come. This went on until Immanuel was eight years old, at which time he could recite most of it from memory alone. The words, Immanuel thought, were etched into his DNA.

“Dad, I'm looking forward to the lecture tomorrow.” Father shrugged and looked—up, this time—at Immanuel. “It's not going to be a big deal, really. The only people that come to these things are old farts, which I can see all day in Louisiana.” Father looked up to the sky and contemplated the heavens for a moment, still and silent. Immanuel stood next to him, in total reverence, waiting for the next few words. “Manny,” father said, “we have to get this out to people, the real people. The world is filled with people wanting to hear what we have to say, you know. Philosophers used to be men of the people, and for the people. Now we're men only for other philosophers.” Immanuel nodded and thought about what father had just said. It was true. Immanuel spoke softly, like a patient apprentice, “I know, dad. But most people don't even understand half the things we talk about. What's metaphysics have to do with making lives better?” Father peered down his nose and put a firm hand on Immanuel's shoulder, squeezing to emphasize every word. “Nothing, Manny. Metaphysics doesn't make people's lives better. You do, though. And you do a great job. Your search for truth persuades others to do likewise, and the truth is good. It is not the content of a philosopher's work that makes him great, but how he notices its beauty, and then goes on to show that beauty to other people. That's a philosopher. You get me?” Immanuel nodded again in empty agreement, “Of course I do.”
Father walked on, looking back at Immanuel to signal that they should resume walking. “Manny, what happened with your mother last week?” Immanuel didn’t want to talk about this, but father always made difficult subjects easy. “She wanted me to come home for the summer, and I didn’t want to go. I was very angry, and then I hung up the phone.” Father walked through the grass to a shaded area with a sturdy bench. “Manny, come sit down over here. I want to talk to you for a bit.” Immanuel quickly lit a cigarette and sat down next to his father. “Look, I know I was wrong. I shouldn’t have hung up on mom, but she makes me so mad. I just don’t want to go home.” Father grinned and patted Immanuel’s back. “No, Manny, I don’t want to talk about that.” Immanuel’s chest opened instantly with relief. He puffed his cigarette again, taking a deep drag and then leaning back to blow out the smoke. Father looked around, as if he were—for the first time—at a loss for words. “Manny, do you remember all the trouble that occurred between your mom and I when you were little?”

“Yeah, how could I forget? That damned guy would come over at all hours of the night and mess up your books. I loved those books—”

“What guy, Manny?”

Immanuel didn’t intend to let this slip. He assumed his mother had told him the truth long ago, when he left for Princeton. Immanuel couldn’t lie to his father. He couldn’t take this back, though he wanted to. He wanted to rewind the last ten seconds and make it not exist. Immanuel started to cry, shaking the ash off his lit cigarette. “Dad, just let it go. You don’t need to know this stuff. Besides, everything’s better now. I shouldn’t have let that slip. I’m sorry, dad. Okay? Just leave me alone.”

Father grabbed Immanuel’s shirt and pulled him forth, dumping the cigarette from his moist lips. “Tell me, Manny. Tell me right this second, What did your mother do?”

“Dad, please!” Immanuel pleaded.

“Don’t force me to treat you this way. Tell the truth, Manny. It’s good for you.”

“Okay, dad. I just don’t know where to begin.”

Immanuel first explained what father already knew well. He said that mother drank—red wine mostly—from elegant glasses in the morning and then from paper ones by noonday. It was June, and the sun that shone through the slits of the Venetian blinds lit the house dimly. Mother sat alone, leaving Immanuel, ten years old, to do what he pleased. Immanuel ran to see his father off for work, giving a hug and then a pat on the back. Father leaned down to Immanuel, and peered at him over his glasses, which perched on the tip of his nose. “Let’s see what you can do with this.” Immanuel responded immediately. “I’m going to talk about it.” Immanuel turned to his mother who was absorbed in her reading, but at the prospect of talking to his father, she ducked into the old pajamas in the den, sucked in another puff of a cigarette, and looked at him sternly as she walked past.
Immanuel didn't want to talk about it. "She wanted me to come home for the holidays, and then I hung up the phone." Father turned his sturdy bench. "Manny, come sit down and let's talk." Immanuel quickly lit a cigarette and sat down. He couldn't have hung up on mom, but she wouldn't believe him. Father grinned and patted Immanuel's chest. Immanuel's chest opened instantly. He took a deep drag and then leaned back to blow it out-for the first time—at a loss for words. "I'm sorry, Manny. It's good for you."

Father said, "Let's see what you can do with this," father said, "and when I get home we can talk about it." Immanuel responded immediately, "Yeah, I will read it today. The whole thing." Immanuel turned to his mother with book in hand, excited at this point not about reading, but at the prospect of talking to his father that afternoon. Mother sat in her faded old pajamas in the den, sucked in another drag of cigarette smoke, and turned away from Immanuel, as if he never existed. But Immanuel was much too excited to be bothered with his mother today. He was going to speak to his father like the other professors spoke to him, like an equal.

Immanuel read most of the morning, stopping only to use the bathroom, which he held until the last possible second. Immanuel ran into the bathroom, unzipped his trousers and continued reading. The splash of on the toilet seat, and then on the ground forced him to set the book down on top of the toilet while he cleaned the mess he had made. Just as Immanuel cleaned up the last drop he heard noise at the front door. He stopped for a moment to listen more closely. It was a man's voice. He heard his mother laughing from the living room at something he couldn't quite make out. A few seconds later, footsteps crept down the hallway, broken intermittently by the sound of his mother yelping with girlish laughter. The footsteps got closer, passed Immanuel's room, and ended with a shut of the door to his parent's room. They were in there a while, at least an hour, Immanuel thought to himself. He grew nervous and unable to focus on the book, and carefully peeked around the door jam to ease his mind. The sounds of his mother and the strange man bore down upon him, and his stomach began to hurt. He clinched his aching stomach with his arms and rocked back and forth. The sounds persisted, inching their way into Immanuel's mind, transforming him from the inside out. He cupped his ears, still rocking, repeating to himself the things his father said to him time and time again.

"Death is not the worst that can happen to men."

"Ignorance is the root and stem of every evil."

"No evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death."

"Death is not the worst that can happen to men."

"Ignorance is the root and stem..."
this shit, you know. If he were my son I'd take all those books and throw them out. Your husband is raising a little pussy, Julie. Like father, like son, right? This kid is as screwed up as you are." The man lit one of father's favorite cigars and puffed a few times, sending a cloud of smoke into the room. "I'll be in our room when you're done." Mother ignored the insults and the smoke as she was at Immanuel's side. She slowly brought Immanuel's hands down from his ears. She spoke softly and patiently to Immanuel, and explained that the man was a friend, and that he had come over to talk. Immanuel was smarter than that. He knew everything.

For the next couple of years the man would visit less often, mostly at night while Immanuel's father was out of town. Immanuel watched the man sit in his father's chair and try to read his books, which he threw down disrespectfully onto the floor after the first page, putting a permanent crease across Aristotle's face on the cover. Immanuel always bent the pages and covers of the books back into shape, dusted them off, and placed them back on the shelf. "These books," his father always said, "are the backbone of what we fight for, what we live for. Manny, you are the heir to justice and goodness and truth; the things that many great men before you have died trying to instill in the world. Your ancestors are in these books." Immanuel remembered this every time he repaired another defiled text. As he repaired another book—The Republic, this time—Immanuel, for the first time of his short life, had come to hate everything about man.

Immanuel slowly composed himself and let everything go. He told his father about everything, including the bent copy of Aristotle's Ethics that left a permanent scar on Aristotle's face. Mother explained the bent cover by saying that Immanuel was not careful with his father's things, and that he should probably be punished. Immanuel took his lashes without saying a word, and went about his day after a sincere apology. "Manny, I know that things must have been hard for you, but every part of the truth isn't as beautiful as I always thought it would be, Manny." Please forgive me.

Love,
Dad

It was a usual custom for Immanuel to study the lecturers, but father wanted to be alone on me. I need to think about some things, and I have been rough on you too. I love you, Mummy. You've turned out wonderfully." Immanuel said, as he went back to his room.

The next morning Immanuel woke at 11 for lunch with his father and the other professors about his daily morning routine. The shock wore off quickly when he remembered the two other men that came to visit mother. Immanuel became anxious and excited, but he put on clothes, hoping to catch a glance of Father. Father was always early, Immanuel thought, no longer.

Immanuel was late getting to the hall. It was the same as usual, and this time was no different. Professor pointed out the points of obscure journal articles, mostly to put around for his father, who was most likely an average student. But Immanuel couldn't make sense of it all. Immanuel made his way to the front row. Immanuel, I see you're late... again. Looks like I'll have to read it, quote, 'as soon as possible,' Immanuel said he wanted you to read it, as soon as possible. Immanuel was perplexed, but hastily opened the pages, and was seated in the dark, vacant classroom.

Manny,

I know that things must have been hard for you if I had known sooner, but every part of the truth isn't as beautiful as I always thought. The most beautiful thing to ever happen in my life, Remembering that I was a man." Please forgive me.

Love,
Dad
It was a usual custom for Immanuel to stay with his father in the suite at Princeton for visiting lecturers, but father wanted to be alone. "Look, Manny. Today has been a little rough on me. I need to think about some things, so I'll see you tomorrow at the lecture. Today has been rough on you too. I love you, Manny. Don't ever forget that. I'm so proud of you. You've turned out wonderfully." Immanuel hugged his father solemnly and waved goodbye as he went back to his room.

The next morning Immanuel woke at 11 o'clock, almost in time to eat the ceremonial lunch with his father and the other professors. Immanuel didn't mind missing it, and went about his daily morning routine. The shower and shave rejuvenated him, but the feeling wore off quickly when he remembered the conversation with his father the day before. Immanuel became anxious and excited, looking out of his window intermittently while putting on clothes, hoping to catch a glance of his father making his way to the lecture hall. Father was always early, Immanuel thought. There was no point in looking out the window any longer.

Immanuel was late getting to the hall. Immanuel's father always drew the whole faculty, and this time was no different. Professors murmured back and forth, discussing the finer points of obscure journal articles, mostly those of Immanuel's father. Immanuel looked around for his father, who was most likely chatting with another professor or eager graduate student. But Immanuel couldn't make out one dark suit among a hundred others. As Immanuel made his way to the front row of the hall, Dr. Jones stepped out to greet him.

"Immanuel, I see you're late ... again. Look, your father wanted me to give this to you. He said he wanted you to read it, quote, 'as soon as you get it'. I'm going to your father's suite for a bit. I think my notes are over there, and I'm sure your father forgot them, as usual.'" Immanuel was perplexed, but hastily opened the tear-stained letter while he ran into a dark, vacant classroom.

Manny,

I know that things must have been hard for you with your mother and all, I really wish I had known sooner, but every part of me wishes that I never knew at all, I suppose that truth isn't as beautiful as I always thought it was, I love you, son. You will always be the best thing to ever happen in my life, Remember: "Death is not the worst that can happen to man." Please forgive me.

Love,

Dad
Immanuel sprinted furiously, empty slivers of thought lodged in his mind in several directions, creating a mosaic of irrational thought from which he could not escape until he had—in his mind—a vision of his father once again, Immanuel ran harder, each stride becoming longer as his groin ached from overexertion, The fronts of his shins were worn on, aching with each burst of pressure on his slender calves, At last, the front door of the suite appeared, As Immanuel stopped to gaze on it he became sullen, a man withdrawn and heartbroken, The thoughts of his father that flooded his memory were disconnected, broken copies of a life story that Immanuel held with the utmost respect, Immanuel slowly walked to the front door, with a lifted right hand ready to meet his new world.

Dr. Jones answered the door with an air of solemn reverence, as if he knew what the letter had said already, Dr. Jones was silent for a moment, anticipating the reaction to come, and quickly embraced Immanuel as he started to cry, "I found him just a couple of minutes ago, Manny, He was a great man, the best of us, We all loved your father." Dr. Jones explained to Immanuel that he became worried about his father when he hadn't shown up for the lunch, which Immanuel's father was never late for, Dr. Jones had called the locksmith already by the time he gave Immanuel the letter, demanding the door to the suite be opened immediately, Dr. Jones ran to the unlocked door to find Immanuel's father hanging in his room, His feet dangled with imperceptible rhythm, His glasses had fallen onto the floor next to Aristotle's scarred face, Immanuel walked slowly into the room and picked up the book, which he restored yet again, All of Immanuel's thoughts on man were confirmed with one look up at his father's hanging body, Everything became clearer through the tears.

**Just Like Mom**

By April L. Paul

"...because as a student, I was starved for examples..."

I settled into my chair only a minute or two late to my fiction writing workshop, The professor—undaunted by my tardiness—continued talking about his personal experiences, I felt my A.D.D. kick in.

Starved, Yes, I am—starved, I wish I had some more Wheat Thins, Nah, that box was too small for $1.89, But it is such a cute little box; funny, you don't normally think of boxes as being 'cute.' Cute is reserved for little freckled girls with curly, brown hair tied up in pigtails complimented by shiny sea green ribbons, And oh! Those little saddle shoes, the black and white kind, I remember owning a pair of those once, My father gave them to me for—was it Christmas? Oh, no, it was for my seventh birthday, right after a particularly bad day...

"...in fact, it wasn’t until I read Carver..."