Kentucky Bourbon Festival

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I'm in the front seat pressing both feet into a Chevrolet's dented dash and we are slinking closer to the crowd filled with dark beer and bourbon, gyros with blue cheese, and chili fries, and where a live blues band tricks them into swaying their hips, side to side. But that's not the one I hear.

We slow to a stop at a red and a blinking orange man to say walk, and to my right is a brick clinic that's swarmed with collared shirts, pale skin, and a vengeful god. I hear the roar of packed hot bodies through red and blue bull horns that shriek Killer and Fire of Hell, at a woman who is pushing through signs that drip blood, and burn with flames that create fumes, and can make clean lungs cough. Blurred faces catapult spit, and holy curses kick her cheek, while men with patched badges push back, and shield her from the throngs of white smoke. But it's not enough, so I still see her tears that crumble her face in.

I look at her, and she is my sister at eight, stung by the girls from school, who heard my mother's cracked voice say, let's pray for them. She is me at thirteen, caught up by the ceiling. Just to scream at God through a vent, to wish tears would fall upwards to touch his cheek too.

I look at her and I want to say, God is the sand on a one day beach trip, so when you think you leave him, he stays. In the shoes that squish with every step, in the grain of tear ducts, and fiber of rubber hair bands, that bend so far you wonder how they don't break. On the dash and floor boards of S 10 Fords, in the way sea and sand cling to your skin.

I look at her, and attempt to extend out cloud arms through the glass. I try to fold around her like a fog, to hug in the hope she's losing. I let her inhale me in, like particles of mist, so I can tell her, you are holy.

Holy like the way God's front porch of his summer home is my own, holy like the way my sister's hair flows perfectly curved behind her ear, holy like how the best swings always creak loud over Eddie's slide guitar, holy like the smell of fresh oil paint at French Quarter, holy like the sound of my father's smile, when my daughter blows spit bubbles, holy like how lightning storms are seen better with bitter red wine, so I think, this is power, while I feel drops of rain leaking from under a holey porch.

I need to tell her, but, please, forgive me, I don't. Because when the light flips to green, my mother's foot pushes a pedal down, and we soar towards the crowd with graffiti t-shirts, dough that drips in chocolate and sugar dust, and rings that wrap around lips that ask, hey do you have a lighter?

They belong to a man that wants to start a fire between his ribs on purpose, and I want to swipe the cigarette away that is squished between his upper and lower lip, and shout that three miles away, there is a woman suffocating by smoke, and being probed by a tube that will suck the life out of her.

But, please, forgive me, I don't.

I give a man with a pony tail the ten dollars that crinkled in my jeans pocket, for a burger with too much mayonnaise, and wipe away its grease that has slid past my lips, and bubbles over on my chin, instead.

And still, I call myself holy.