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"Amen!"

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"Amen!"

Jack never could understand why his mother grew so upset when he did it. The first time she noticed was when he was seven and she asked him how he got up there on top of the barn. Jack flew down to demonstrate and his mother flew into hysterics. She ordered that he never do it again and stomped off muttering something about "kids these days".

His brothers were more amiable about the whole matter, yet Jack never could manage to get them airborne — but not for lack of trying. He explained it was a simply a matter lifting one foot while at the same time lifting the other; but to no avail. They seemed to be destined to pass life with both feet anchored to the ground.

Yet Jack loved flying and it proved to be a rather useful skill. No one could ever understand why he was able to pick six bushels of the very best apples from Mr. Peterson's orchard, everyone else was limited to one. No one could understand either, how he knew the color of Suzy Alcot's nightware. And as much as she protested her innocence, he was able to spout off the information daily, confirmed by a beet-red Suzy.

But the best thing he liked about flying was the flying itself. The birds accepted him as their equal, and Jack reveled in that acceptance. He never really went too far out of his way to hide his skill, in fact, Jack made frequent landings in the middle of town. But the townsfolk would just keep walking like nothing had happened. After all, who wanted to be the first one to start up some nonsense like "I saw the Ewell boy swoop down from the sky today just like a bird". Folks were likely to be put in jail for saying such foolishness.

It was hot.

Not just a little warm, but a sticky, steamy, slimy, sort of heat you could almost taste. And if Jack would have pressed his brain with the place he would most hate to be, he was there.

Church.

Not just any church, but the First Walker United Baptist Church. The same church he had been lead to every Sunday since the dawn of time. Down the cobblestone path, up the creaking steps, through the whitewashed walls, and over to the second pew on the right.

The town of Macomb had been without a full time minister for some time now, after Pastor Roberts had passed away, and this Sunday the church was packed to the brim. The new minister was supposed to arrive, and no one had even seen him yet. Every single pew was packed with fanning fat ladies and stern straight men. Jack sat between his two younger brothers, and Mom and Pop sat near the aisle. Ma kept the younger boys in line with foreboding glares that promised the direst of punishments when they got back home. Jack just sat, wishing he were somewhere flying or anywhere but right there. Finally a door opened in the back and everyone spontaneously cocked his head around to take a gander. A paunch, red-faced, man in a dark suit and greased hair waddled down the center aisle and took his place in the front. He stared back at the congregation staring at him and rewarded everyone with an ear-to-ear grin revealing a flashing set of teeth. "Good afternoon brethren!!" he boomed.

"Good afternoon" they chorused in reply.

"My name is Justice Tate and I've been sent to be your new minister..."

Jack drifted in and out of blissful unconsciousness as Rev. Tate continued with his sermon.

"...and it has come to my mind that there are demons and witches among you my brethren!"

Jack perked up at this part. He liked hearing about witches and such.

"Yeaas, here among us are the servants of Satan out to steal our souls!" He paused, allowing himself to mop the already drenched handkerchief over his forehead. "These workers of evil would love to steal yo' babies and drinks the blood at dey rituals!"

A gasp of horror stirred the heated congregation.

"Yeass my brethrens, and dey has special unnatural powers, dey can read yo minds, and some of em's can fly!"

The sweat on Jack's forehead froze into icy droplets, and his racing heartbeat was almost audible.

"We must rid ourselves of this plague that threatens to deliver us to hell!"

'Amen's' chorused from the congregation. Jack shrank down into his seat, eyeing all the potential traitors that snuck repeated glances at him.

"Now I wont's dem with the Lord in dey hearts to give me a 'amen'!"

"AMEN REVEREND!!" Sister Truman screamed from the back, a bit louder than the other church mothers.

"Now ah wonts dem who knows to fear the devil to give me a amen!"

Several brethren jumped up to outdo Sister Truman. They were really in a frenzy now.

"Now Brethren, ah knows that some of you have witnessed this sorcery and witchcraft, and ah wants you to come forward and points outs the Demon in our midst."

Silence.

Heavy, sticky, silence.

Jack looked over and saw his mother nervously wringing her handbag and Pop with fixed jaw, and eyes focused directly to the front. Jack wanted to disappear, he wanted to flee, he wanted to fly...

"Those who hides the devil are just as the devil hisself..." the Reverend prodded.

Eyes. Darting, telling, knowing, pairs of eyes warmed the back of Jacks' neck.

"They'll drink the very blood of yor babies..." reminded the Reverend.

Sister Truman shot up in the back. "I know! I know who duh demon is Reverend!"

Jack screamed. "Lord, take me the way you took Jesus your son!"

The Reverend's jaw dropped. There was a boy floating midair in full view of his entire congregation. Clearly this was some type of divine revelation. "Dat boy must be some kinda saint" he gasped.

A hushed whisper of awe accompanied Jack's short flight, and all thoughts of demons were quite forgotten.

The quiet was punctuated only by the buzzing of several flies around Rev. Tate's head. "Brethren" he said, "I do believe we have witnessed a miracle."

Never was there such a hearty chorus of Amen's in affirmation.

After services, Jack's mother became quite the center of attention. She modestly accepted the praise and attributed it all to good Christian living.

"You must be one God-fearing woman" said one.

"A modern day Mary" said another.

Sister Truman, of course, had a few words to add. "I always knew their was sometin' special 'bout that boy." Suzy Alcott closed her curtain from that day forward.