

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

1-1-2017

Stories

Marc David Inman

University of Mississippi

Follow this and additional works at: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Inman, Marc David, "Stories" (2017). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations*. 1249.

<https://egrove.olemiss.edu/etd/1249>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

Stories

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Mississippi

Marc Inman

May 2017

Copyright © 2017 by Marc Inman
All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

This is a work of fiction.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
CHAPTER I	1
VITA	124

CHAPTER I

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing

the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb.
“Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their

homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing

House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. "I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground," said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. "Well," he said, "I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open

fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a

man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors were Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events:

the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving

the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right

hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. "I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground," said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting

to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father

constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He

pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl’s house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he’s showing it to people. He’s like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. “It opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. "I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground," said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding

and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite

observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There’s even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl’s, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn’t go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at

church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within

the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl’s house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he’s showing it to people. He’s like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. “It opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right

there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl’s right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher’s Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy’s mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache

and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms

around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There’s even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl’s, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy

doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides

his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl’s house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he’s showing it to people. He’s like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. “It opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for

a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl’s right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher’s Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy’s mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be

retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time of all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family

standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There’s even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl’s, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church

together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if

the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl’s house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he’s showing it to people. He’s like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. “It opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and

opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl’s right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher’s Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy’s mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what

with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until,

finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really

collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It

opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl’s right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher’s Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy’s mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the

boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to

people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail

of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror

image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There’s even blood on the doors were Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is

talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture

of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported

between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the

street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew

them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be

quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished

“It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of

houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “P”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading

up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors were Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they

are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice

to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down

the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around were it

happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors were Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to

the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window,

peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the

teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose

from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice?

They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide

tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own

house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the

axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front

window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closest shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It’s not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man’s hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don’t we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on

into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to

the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the

windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the

wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished. “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man

chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star.

He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something

happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It's just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can't find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind,

haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only

thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and

millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood

(and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was

unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good

one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The

boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the

basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On

this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just

another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by

mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be

installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a

man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It's just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can't find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this

neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen

stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the

shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you're living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. "Excuse me," the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. "Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?" Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl's mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can't believe the detective is talking to him like this. It's so exciting. It's like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy's father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: "Boy Finds Missing Hand." In the picture, he's giving the hand back to Karl, and they're shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the

boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a

second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It's just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can't find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "I". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in

the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside

below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep

talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand

clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl's home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy's house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl's home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter "P". The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy's feet, but he still hadn't seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl's family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy's father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They

scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors were Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all

that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began

screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-

hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the “irony” of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn’t realize why this is such a good story.

#

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn’t sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It’s just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can’t find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn’t leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing

the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb.
“Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their

homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing

House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

#

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. "I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground," said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting

to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished “It's just gone,” the son kept yelling. “I can't find it.” The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. “I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground,” said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing

the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb.
“Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl’s wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their

homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl's wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy's parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl's wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl's house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl's house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he's showing it to people. He's like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. "It opens when I flex," Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. "See." The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. "I still feel the hand," says Karl. "Like my finger should be right there," and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing

House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

#

The neighbor told the police it had happened like this: He was out chopping firewood (and mind you, this was in the middle of summer, on the hottest day of the year) when something happened, he wasn't sure what, that made his axe veer off course, and instead of splitting the wood, he chopped his hand off. So, he ran inside for help, leaving his hand where it fell, by the axe and the wood. And when his wife—after wrapping his wound with a T-shirt and telling the teen-age daughter to call nine-one-one—sent the ten-year-old son out with a Tupperware of ice to retrieve the hand, the son soon ran back inside, upset, saying that it—the hand!—had vanished "It's just gone," the son kept yelling. "I can't find it." The son had looked all over, he reported between sobs, by the pool of blood next the wood and the axe, and he had even followed a trail of blood to the house, looking along the way. But nothing.

The police asked if maybe the neighbor had moved his hand and not remembered—what with him being in shock and everything. A safe spot, maybe, up off the ground, where it could be retrieved later. "I mean, I wouldn't leave my hand on the ground," said the cop with a mustache and notepad. Or, they asked, had he noticed anything suspicious that might aid them in finding and recovering the hand? The neighbor contemplated this as he laid back on the stretcher waiting

to be loaded into the ambulance. “Well,” he said, “I thought I saw a dog pacing around the open fence.” He raised his right arm, as if he were about to point, forgetting that he was now missing the appendage. He then raised his left arm and motioned to the area by the fence with his thumb. “Over there.”

#

A boy, eleven at the time off all this, who lived up the street, would forever associate this neighbor, Karl, with the misguided pursuit of dreams, due to what would be later revealed. On this day, though, the day of the accident, as he heard the ambulance approaching, the boy was unaware of what was happening down the street and how the events would bury into his mind, haunting him.

Upon seeing the ambulance come to rest in front of Karl’s home through the large front window, the boy rushed for the binoculars atop the coat closet shelf. Outside, waves of heat rose from the blacktop making the world seem a bit dreamy. He raised the binoculars. The view down the long street was unencumbered. Their suburb existed on the side of mountain—rows of houses perched higher and higher, almost to the tip-top. And the boy’s house sat at the top of the street, looking west, straight down on Karl’s home, which faced east—a sort of slanted mirror image—the three streets forming the letter “I”. The hot gravel had begun to burn the soles of the boy’s feet, but he still hadn’t seen anything of interest—the ambulance blocked the view—until, finally, someone on a stretcher. After titling the binoculars up a bit, the boy spotted Karl’s family standing in front of the house—the mother, the daughter, and the son. They had their arms around each other and were crying, seemingly at odds, the boy observed—as the boy was quite observant—with the clear blue sky and their perfectly manicured yard, which the boy’s father

constantly pointed out was taken care of by Karl's wife, including the mowing. And how could a man make his wife mow the lawn?

#

The cops looked the scene over. How does a hand disappear? Was there foul play? They scratched their heads. But what kind of foul play could there have been? It's not like anyone in the family had reason to hide the man's hand from him. They both concluded they had seen stranger things in their line of work, right? Don't we have some stories? This would be just another of those this-one-time type stories they could roll out at dinner parties. And a pretty good one at that. Maybe a bird had flown down and snatched the hand, they laughed. But, the only thing to really go on was the dog. What are the odds, they asked, that at the same time a man chops off his hand, a dog is walking by, and as the man goes into the house, the dog moseys on into the yard and runs off with the hand, all before a son runs out with a Tupperware of ice? They shrug. They have nothing else. The scene looks as it should: The blood pool around where it happened, the trail of blood to the house in the grass, and then blood on the cement patio leading up to the sliding glass doors of the basement. There's even blood on the doors where Karl drew them open. A lot, they observe.

#

Next is where the boy sees his fate intertwined with Karl's, or at least, where their paths really collide for the first time. Sure the boy knows them, Karl and his family. They all go to church together. Just about everybody in the neighborhood goes to church together. Though the boy doesn't go to school with the kids. His street is a sort of school boundary, so he only sees them at church, sitting on the wood pew as a family or in the halls.

Curious and desperate for excitement, the boy has stayed outside, watching the events: the ambulance leaving, more police cars arriving. Other neighbors have gone back into their homes. Piano lessons across the street have resumed. He raises the binoculars occasionally, but the action, unfortunately, seems to be inside the home. From his lawn, the boy has a view of all that is around him—his own miniature world to look out over: the homes on the mountainside below; the flat, stretched-out valley in the distance with its industrial areas and oil refineries; the shimmering lake; and finally, the high, western mountain range. They are, in fact, surrounded by mountain ranges—high, curving ranges, that make it feel like you’re living in a fish bowl. The boy has often thought a long rainstorm could fill it all up with water as it had been millions and millions of years ago.

At this point, the boy is approached by the detective. “Excuse me,” the detective says to the boy. The detective holds a pen and a pad and wears a short sleeve white dress shirt and wide tie. “Could you tell me who in your neighborhood owns dogs?” Then the detective explains to the boy about Karl’s mishap, how they, the police, believe a dog ran off with the hand, so they are now trying to locate all the neighborhood dogs, which the detective knows is going to be quite the trick, but they really need to find that hand. The boy can’t believe the detective is talking to him like this. It’s so exciting. It’s like a movie. Or a TV show.

#

Days later, and the hand is still loose, as the boy’s father puts it. The boy likes this wording, as if the hand were scurrying about on its own. The boy believes the hand will turn up. When he rides his bike, he looks carefully at the bushes he peddles past, searching for white skin buried within the dark green. He imagines himself finding the hand. Would he get some sort of reward? He

pictures himself in the local newspaper: “Boy Finds Missing Hand.” In the picture, he’s giving the hand back to Karl, and they’re shaking hands—left hands, of course.

The boy hears all sorts of things. He hears that Karl’s wife was folding laundry and watching TV when her husband came running inside with his bloody wound, the daughter began screaming, and the wife had to quickly take control. The boy’s parents and the neighbors keep talking: What was Karl doing chopping firewood on the hottest day of the year? Karl’s wife, the boy knows, has explained that Karl was preparing for the wood-burning stove they would be installing in the basement come fall, an item Karl was very excited about, given that the basement was always too cool.

Karl’s house, the boy feels, calls to him. It has a gravitational force, like the Death Star. He changes his usual routes so he can ride his bike past the house, trying to get a look in the windows or into the backyard, hoping to hear or witness something. Anything. When in his own house, the boy kneels on the couch, his stomach on the back rest, and faces out the window, peering down at Karl’s house.

#

The next time the boy sees Karl is at church. Karl stands in front of a floral couch and a picture of Jesus, and he has a new mechanical hook where his hand used to be, and he’s showing it to people. He’s like a carnival attraction. A freak show. See the one-armed man. Step right up. “It opens when I flex,” Karl tells the churchgoers gathered around him. “See.” The hook whirls and opens and closes and rotates as Karl twists his wrist slowly. He seems excited to have a hook for a hand, which puzzles the boy. “I still feel the hand,” says Karl. “Like my finger should be right there,” and he pokes the air where the tip of his missing index finger should exist.

At home, the boy finds out insurance money was paid. More since it was Karl's right hand. The boy imagines the money coming in the form of an oversized Publisher's Clearing House check. And this is where the story really begins to take shape, where the ideas of dreams and failures begins, at least in the boy's mind, because the next summer, Karl opens a second-hand clothing store. And in the future, when the boy tells the story of Karl and his second-hand clothing store, people will point out what they call the "irony" of a one-armed man having a second-hand clothing store, as if they boy has never made the connection—as if the boy, now a man, doesn't realize why this is such a good story.

VITA

Marc Inman

EDUCATION

MFA Creative Writing, University of Mississippi, 2017

Thesis Advisor: Chris Offutt

BA Film Studies, University of Utah, 1998

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Adjunct Instructor, University of Mississippi, 2016-present

Graduate Teaching Instructor, University of Mississippi, 2014-2016

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Mississippi, 2013-2014

Courses Taught

First-Year Writing 1, Writing 101 (2 sections per semester), Fall 2016-Spring 2017

Introduction to Cinema Studies, English 310, Summer 2016

Beginning Fiction Workshop, English 302, Fall 2015

First-Year Writing 2, Writing 102: Pop Culture (2 sections), Spring 2015

First-Year Writing 1, Writing 101, Fall 2014

Introduction to Creative Writing, English 300, Summer 2014

Teaching Assistant

American Literature since Civil War, English 224, Fall 2013-Spring 2014

3 sections per semester as discussion leader and principal grader

AWARDS & GRANTS

Dissertation Fellowship, University of Mississippi, Spring 2016

Emerging Artist Grant, Film, Utah Arts Council, 2007

Society of Illustrators Award, Art Direction, key art for short film, 2005

Panavision New Filmmaker Grant, 2003

PUBLICATIONS

Short Films

Know the Customer, 2007

Director/Writer

Nashville Film Festival, Nashville, TN, March 2008 (Oscar qualifying festival)

Black Maria Film Festival, Jersey City, NJ, 2008 (Oscar qualifying festival)

Director's Choice Award

Utah Arts Council Artist Showcase, Rio Grande Gallery, Salt Lake City, 2007

Emerging Artist Award

Loving Kimberly, 2004

Director/Writer

Sacramento Film Festival, Sacramento, CA, April 2005

"Young Love" program

Garden State Film Festival, Asbury Park, NJ, March 2005

Essays & Stories

"My Brother's Dinner with the President of Sears" (memoir/essay), under submission, winter 2016-17

"You Haven't Lived Until You've Almost Died" (memoir/essay), under submission, winter 2016-17

“Hit-&-Run” (short-short/fiction), under submission, winter 2016-17

READINGS

Broken English, March 2016

University of Mississippi MFA Reading Series, Oxford, Mississippi

Broken English, December 2013

University of Mississippi MFA Reading Series, Oxford, Mississippi

Weber State University National Undergraduate Literary Conference, April 2013
Ogden, Utah

Enormous Rooms, May 2012

University of Utah Undergraduate Literary Magazine Reading Series
Salt Lake City, Utah

University of Utah Undergraduate Literary Conference, April 2012

Salt Lake City, Utah

SELECT JOB HISTORY

Production Supervisor

Excel Entertainment Group, June 2007-Dec 2008, Salt Lake City, Utah

Coordinated and supervised post-production needs on feature films and commercials

Produced film trailers and promotional materials for feature films such as television commercials, a television special, DVD extra features, and radio ads

Supervised replication of theatrical trailers, 35 mm prints, and digital prints; and placement and delivery of trailers, prints, and marketing materials to theaters

Art directed and coordinated printing of point-of-purchase marketing materials, DVD entrapments, DVD face art, and displays for DVD products and theatrical releases

Supervised printing of an illustrated children’s book

Coordinated placement of feature film trailers to online sites; organized and placed promotional segments shown in local theaters

Assisted in numerous public promotional events, tradeshow, and film premieres—including a national release in New York City

Film Production

Various Companies, Jan 1998-June 2007, Salt Lake City, Utah

Select jobs include:

Production Assistant—National spot for Ameriprise starring Dennis Hopper

Producer’s Assistant—*The Amazing Race*/CBS, 1 episode, Salt Lake City

Assistant to the Talent Coordinator—AOL/MovieFone, 2007 Sundance Film Festival, coordinated talent for *AOL Unscripted* and *Black Voices*, a series of web shows during the Sundance Film Festival

Production Assistant—Moxie Films, national spots directed by Jared Hess (*Napoleon Dynamite*) for Nike, Helio, ESPN, etc.

1st Assistant Director—Studeo Interactive, a series of national direct response ads

Assistant Director—Spots for companies such as Telos, Metropolis, Trek West, Kaleidoscope, etc, for clients

Associated Foods, Franklin Covey, etc.

2nd 2nd Assistant Director—*Fortune Cookie*, feature film

2nd Unit Assistant Director—*Out of Step*, feature film

Production Assistant—Local and national spots for GO RV, Fountainhead Productions, Left Turn Pictures, etc., and PBS special “Innovators”

Grip/Electric—Local and national spots for companies such as Cosmic Pictures and Telos Productions, for clients such as March of Dimes, Proctor and Gamble, IHC, UTA, KBYU, etc.

Art Department—*The Testaments*, Imax film

Locations Manager—Metropolis Productions, local ad spots

Camera Assistant

2001 Sundance Filmmakers Lab, June 2001, Sundance Institute, Salt Lake City, Utah
Assisted Independent Spirit Award nominated cinematographer, Harlan Bosmajian, on films *The Sleep Dealer* and *Stephanie Dailey*, both of which went on to win the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Award at the Sundance Film Festival

Assistant Coordinator for Volunteers
1999 Sundance Film Festival, Oct 1998-Feb 1999, Sundance Institute, Salt Lake City, Utah
Assisted in the coordination and assignment of over 900 volunteers for the festival
Solely responsible for maintenance of volunteer database, setup of BMG Music Café, and hiring and assigning of translators for international filmmakers