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## Images

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## JOHN HAWKINS

### *Images*

"Did you even try?" she asked, cracking her knuckles in the passenger seat. "I mean, did you put any effort in?"

She leaned back against the window frame, hung her head out the space where the window used to be, made an "O" with her lips and blew the floating clumps of pollen winding their way down from tree branches high above, made them swirl around each other like snowflakes above the vents in the city.

"Do you remember when we built that tree house?" I asked, pumping the gas pedal as if it were still connected to a fuel line, reaching my arm back to wrap around a shoulder that was too far out the window to reach. "We thought it was the biggest thing in the world. Three stories, a ladder and buckets on pulleys. Slept up there even. When the county tore it down, it was like a symbol of the end of innocence or something."

"So you didn't try," she said, letting the gnats swarm around her hand as it reached toward the spot where our tree house used to be. "Kyle, you're a writer. How hard can it be?"

"Four images," I said, "is harder than it looks. I did everything I could."

"No you didn't, Kyle." She sat up and looked at me. I looked out my window at the mailbox, the grass grown all the way up to the top of the post.

"That grass is like seaweed," I said. "And the mailbox is like a cove, a little hiding spot for fishes to swim in and out of."

"Or eels," she said.

"Eels?"

"Eels. One eel. He would hide in there for days and days, waiting for something interesting to swim by, and then he would grab it. He would grab it and hold on, because he would know it might be the only fish he sees all week. Do you get it, Kyle? Do you get what I'm saying?"

Her curls bounced on her shoulders as she talked, and for a second I believed we were underwater, and we swam up and up, past the tree and the tree house, up through a hole in a manhole cover in

the city, and we fluttered like snowflakes, and landed on an awning and walked to Dairy Queen and ate BBQ sandwiches like we used to after school when we were 12.

“I’ll try tomorrow,” I said. She grunted and walked up towards the house and the water drained out of the car and the Chevy was rusted again, but even though the sun was making the vinyl melt, I felt like I was on the bottom of a fish tank, domestic tetras swimming around my head, eels at every window.