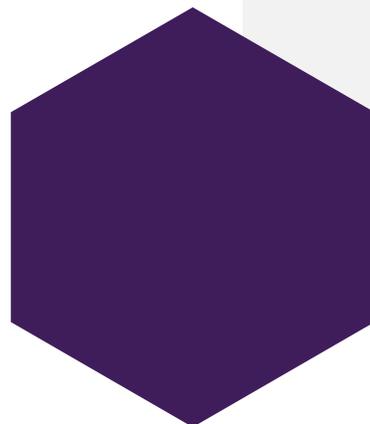
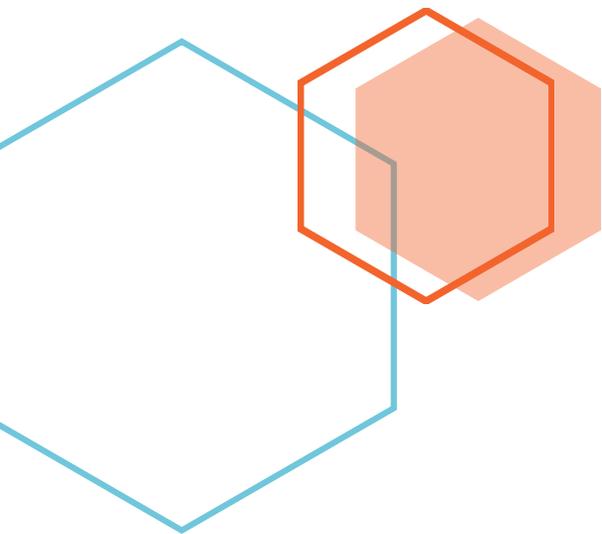


# Jeremiah Stillings

ENG 125 Creative Writing Final  
Portfolio Project

“It was *madness*, but I wanted to be able to write about it; authors who don’t live with madness, don’t have anything to tell.” Jeremiah Stillings 2018



## ENG 125 Creative Writing Final Portfolio Project...

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## ENG 125 Creative Writing Final Portfolio Project...

Flash Fiction – original turn in – Loose a third highlighted

### Memories of Ancestral Madness

By

Jeremiah Stillings

The heat from the fireplace warms my feet and legs as I sit in the armchair. My eyes close and suddenly I recall a memory ages old.

There I was at my forge. Keeping the coal, the right temperature after adding three hard black bricks of new coal took work, planning, and a little luck on the bellows. My dog loved to watch me press my foot on the bellows and wait for the sparks float into the air like fireflies. It was almost comical the way he would watch the action. When he was a puppy he tried to catch the fireflies in his mouth but a hot one got him good and now he just watches. Over time I learned to place the new bricks under the delicate cracked grey bricks, because forge fire heats from the bottom up. It allowed me to use my forge for at least two extra hours each day. Many of my competition did not use this trick, and still placed the new bricks on top of the old. I can hear them from my forge, laughing, and drinking excessively while they *wait* for their forge's heat to grow. I have already made two sets of horse shoes for Issac Stauffer, who showed up just as I was retrieving them from the slack tub. He was happy they were still warm, for Pennsylvania was cold already, and he said chipperly "They should keep my hands warm on the walk back." Why he never rode his horses, I will never know. Odd ones, those Mennonites, but they bring steady work.

There was always work for those willing to actually do it. Some of the richer folks wanted these new cast iron pots made. These were too expensive to do on a normal basis, and I make myself get payment up front, but always find that I use more in materials than I guessed the price would be. That's the way of it, "How much they ask?" never considering the time it took me to learn this trade, the materials I must acquire, nor the actual pain in my left arm when I swing that six-pound hammer down on the metal, and it sends the shock right up the tongs into my arm. I often wonder if I should just hit my arm with the hammer instead but, that would be madness.

I shift my weight in the chair as the fire pops loudly. My eyes close again, I am transported to another time, and I am new again.

It was late in the spring, 1810, if I recall. The breeze blew through my hair as I pulled my shirt from my back. I stood there a moment, taking in the idea, I was going to swim the Hellespont. My foot gave me no worry. I looked down at the clubbed beast and smiled at my own deformity. Excitement was building up inside of me, as I walked up and down the ledge of the channel. I heard all the stories before, it is un-swimmable, the currents are too strong, it is suicide. I wondered how cold the water was really going to be since summer did not have time to bake my madness. It was *madness*, but I wanted to be able to write about it; authors who don't live with madness, don't have anything to tell. I slipped off my lower garments, and before the gathered crowd of friends made any jokes, I jumped.

I bobbed to the surface after the seven-foot drop off the ledge. Yes, it was cold, but the water temperature was the least of my concerns. I immediately felt the tug of the current, it was strong. I let out a laugh, so was my madness. For an hour and ten minutes the fires of that madness fueled me, and I swam the short one mile. My deformity was my greatest asset in the strong currents as the water simply failed to pull on the clubbed foot. With every stroke, a new

Commented [JS1]: Delete white space here... see end note about white space

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Canto, my mind's madness was foretelling the epic satire *Don Juan*. I pulled myself on the shoreline. I should have been exhausted. I should have been dead, yet there I was, full of madness.

Five years later, I spent that madness into my new wife, Annabelle Milbanke. The madness grew, and it led me to the battlefields of Greece as I fought for their independence. Ultimately, I could not tame my madness and it ended me.

I open my eyes to see the log on the fire crumble into pieces. The warmth of the newly exposed ash heats my legs and feet even more. I slid my chair back a few inches. I can feel myself being drawn into the hotness and again my eyes close, as I drift into my ancestral madness.

I had my father's madness alright, but my mind burned with logic and numbers. Charles had invented this clumsy machine, but he never realized it's value, I believed it could act upon other things besides numbers, as long as those objects followed the science of operations. It was October 14th, 1842 and I was translating an Italian man's, Luigi Menabrea I believe, article on Charles's Analytical Engine. I loved the crisp cool air of October because it eases the madness, that I must hide. I organized my notes with letters as I translated as to hide the madness from the reader. By the time I penned the letter G I was fully enflamed, and my headaches were so great that my vision was blurred. All I could see was Bernoulli's numbers. Shortly afterwards there it was, in note G, the algorithm to have the Charles's machine produce them, it would be known as the first computer program ever written.

I had my father's gift for being someone else's lover. Even though I was married to William King, my madness drove me to seek men of daring. Men that loved to gamble as much as me. We secretly devised a mathematical model for placing large bets on the horses. The math was sound but the men I chose were not. They cheated me, and I was forced to tell Charles of the late nights and the model. As my unhidden madness took me from this world, I whispered into Charles's ear that I willed John Crosse my father's heirlooms.

My eyes flash open with a gleam of madness, as I stare at the smoldering fire. The madness passed down through the ages enabled me to recall all the things that I have never done in this life, yet they are my ancestral memories; forever burned into my mind.

Printed notes by Mr. Tuck on the changes needed.

Jerimiah.

On: "Memories of Ancestral Madness"

What's working well: It's clear you are a careful, purposeful writer. You give the details that matter to you and the story, and I believe they are well-chosen. You do a nice job with description, but not only that, I can sense the weight/importance of the lives represented in the three dreams. I appreciate your specificity in each of these with good, real historical detail, and I like that none of these are tired/cliché instances in history, but unique interesting lives in their moment in time. What could be improved: I'm thinking this thing through—the form you've chosen—of packaging three dreams within the frame of a character dozing by a fireplace. I think it's a nice setup. I don't think it works in this particular instance, and by that I mean, in a piece of flash fiction, a VERY short story.

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I think this would be better-suited for a story maybe 3K words long or longer because the vividness and the import of these three lives (maybe former lives) is lost on the reader when we don't get the chance to see the "now" protagonist much at all. I'm interested in those dreams, but no more interested in them than I am of the dreamer and why he dreams these things.

I think the story needs more "now" in other words. This criticism is possibly a tough pill to swallow. It's as much as saying: "Write a story where a character, amidst interacting with other characters in a yet-to-be-determined plot, has these dreams." Easier said than done. But I think the reader needs as much to care about these three dream moments/individuals.

OR, you could mine these three, explode the whole thing, and have yourself three or four stories. I liked the first one most, I think. I love details about the "work" people do. I like to learn in my fiction. (Of course, you don't want to go overboard and turn it into a manual. I've read writers who do this. You didn't, by the way.) I'd love to read a story that exists in the space of that first dream. The other two are fascinating/interesting, but I think the second one should cut the "five years later" part and instead just live in the greater moment of that person's life; the third one is the haziest in my mind, the most difficult to follow. Perhaps this one requires too much historical contextualizing for the reader to fully get what's going on?

Lastly—a technical thing—I want you to remove the "after space" (the gap after each paragraph), and then use intentional white space (an extra strike of the enter key) at the ends of each of the dreams to show the reader that there's a break and we're coming back into the dreamer's consciousness. You can use intentional white space for any number of reasons like these, but the "after space" can be confusing.

Actual lastly, back to my original point, I wonder what a bigger story would be about that had this character dreaming of past lives by the fire? Can I try one out? The dreamer, in his everyday life, feels like he cannot connect with someone he would like to. Perhaps this person is too simple, ignorant (not in the dumb sense, but in the hasn't seen much of the world sense), or stubborn, or who knows? But in this story, we see the dreamer and this person trying and failing to connect. The other person cannot understand the complexities of this person's life/being.

OR—if I might try again—the dreamer is perceived as a dull, simple, ignorant, or otherwise person, yet the few people he interacts with do not sense these complex pieces of his past and how they might make up who he is today.

DT

*It's my understanding that you write long. I want to see what you can do in this compressed form of the very short story.*

Short Story – original turn in – Loose a third highlighted

### God's Customers

Word Count: 2948

By  
Jeremiah Stillings

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The vent blew with a cool sort of heavenly mist mixed with a realism of modern day air conditioning. The vent was placed poorly by whoever designed this call center, and Joel had to grab at the stack of papers he was printing to prevent manual sort mode. Every day he clocked in his standard 15 minutes early so that he could print all his help tickets. Since it was Joel's first help desk job, he developed a routine to help him adhere to the strict script that he **must** follow on every help ticket.

First, he would print the work flow package, then he would highlight the tickets that were marked urgent, **he** placed these in a separate pile, **so** he could triage them with the rules that are a desktop link on his 14-inch monitor. A normal dayshift for him was about 84 tickets, **his** supervisor liked to give him 90 to see if he was able to handle it. He grabbed the pile set aside as urgent and began to read each one very slowly, **speed** was essential in an urgent ticket, but understanding the ticket took deep comprehension of the situation at hand. He was pretty used to the urgent piles requiring the "Situation Tool" **and** he became adept at turning a submission of "Please God" into a fly on the wall **3<sup>rd</sup>** person complete **understanding**.

The first ticket he read was going to need the tool. He looked over at his desk mate, **The Sky Master** was sitting there reading employee files, again. Joel did not know how Doug got his hands on the restricted files **but** that just added to the mystery of his title as "The Sky Master." He turned back to his incredibly small 14-inch monitor and tried to click the Situation Tool icon. His mouse didn't move at all. Without missing a beat, he flipped the mouse over, and removed the tape that The Sky Master placed there every night before he clocked out as part of the initiation period for new team members. The Situation tool loaded up slowly, **"to many moving parts"** is what The Sky Master told him when he trained him how to use it. The new feature, Location Awareness, took the longest to load, but Joel really liked using it, **it** allowed him to see God's employees near the location of the help ticket submission.

The map loaded, and the marker displayed the help ticket submission location for this urgent ticket. Clicking the marker, Joel could see the interstate 95, somewhere in Georgia. There was the ticket holder, **he** was desperately trying to place a mattress on top of a minivan. Joel could see the issue right away, **blowing** in the wind of the passing cars, **who** barely noticed the mattress flopping into the road as it would slide off the roof when the minivan got up to highway speeds, were the broken **tie downs**. The ticket read **"make it stay."** The check mark for "God's Will" was green, and Joel then clicked the right-side bar where God's nearby employees showed up. The map slid off the screen in an overly dramatic way and Joel just chuckled at the time it took someone to do that. He scanned the list looking for an employee to dispatch. Kim was closest and showed up first, but she was a hair dresser. She was not likely to have the **resource** needed to assist. The next on the list was an employee with a gold rating. He clicked the rating to see why. Kevin Yothers earned the gold rating for missing a job interview to do God's Will when dispatched. Joel was amazed by some of

Commented [JS2]: was made to

Commented [JS3]: .

Commented [JS4]: H

Commented [JS5]: Delete comma

Commented [JS6]: Delete comma

Commented [JS7]: Delete comma

Commented [JS8]: Add comma

Commented [JS9]: Add comma

Commented [JS10]: ? lost ya

Commented [JS11]: Delete comma

Commented [JS12]: Add comma

Commented [JS13]: too

Commented [JS14]: Run on change to period

Commented [JS15]: Caps start new line

Commented [JS16]: Delete comma

Commented [JS17]: Change to :

Commented [JS18]: which

Commented [JS19]: tie-downs

Commented [JS20]: add comma

Commented [JS21]: M

Commented [JS22]: resources

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the ratings on employees, one time he found a link to a woman in Kansas who donated her only residence to a local family who were victim of a tornado and lost everything. The ratings never went into detail about what happened to the employee after following God's Will, but Joel knew it all worked out. Kevin was at the butcher shop where he worked part time to make ends meet, he was 2 miles away. It was only 10 am where Kevin was, and Joel knew that if he dispatched him, Kevin would have to use his lunch break to go do God's Will. Could the ticket holder's ticket wait that long? Joel clicked the link to go back to the map and peek in on the situation. It would be lunch rush hour soon, and Joel decided that for safety of those on the highway, he was going to have to dispatch Kevin. Clicking back to the employee side bar, he was looking for Kevin's name when suddenly the Location Awareness showed an update. Jeremy Clemmer was now an option. Clicking the link, he learned that Jeremy was a Landscape professional who was traveling down the highway and would arrive at the location in a few seconds. Without a further thought, Joel clicked dispatch and typed *Stop and make it stay* into the pop-up window labeled "dispatch to employee" and hit the DISPATCH NOW button.

Jeremy was drinking a Mountain Dew and trying not to swallow his chewing tobacco that was tucked in his cheek when he saw the mattress slid off the minivan and flop onto the highway. He laid on the brakes and immediately hit the 4-way flashers. His trailer of mowers, trimmers, and blowers jostled roughly under the new command. He stopped with about 6 feet to spare. Throwing the soda bottle into the cup holder, Jeremy jumped out of the truck. His beard blew up into his face as the passing cars whizzed by, giving no heed. By this time, the mini-van owner was already at the mattress and trying to lift it back onto the roof. Jeremy walked over, assisting a little too late to do any of the lifting of the bulky thing. "How you going to make it stay?" he asked the man in his late 40's who clearly had been driving 10 feet and having the mattress slide off repeatedly. The man gave him a look of total confusion, "I prayed to make it stay" was his answer. Laughing, Jeremy went back to his truck trailer and retrieved a good length of rope. He stood there looking at the lack of a roof rack and wondered how he was going to tie this thing down. The rope slipped out of his hand as he lifted the mattress off the roof and drug it back to his trailer where it fit neatly inside. He walked back to the man and picked up the rope, "You lead." The convoy took off down the highway.

Joel got a desktop notification that Ticket # 13B1229 was now closed, and the Review questionnaire was being sent for his performance on resolving the ticket. Joel just nodded at the notification which disappeared in a few seconds. Joel could now see "The Sky Master" was doing his first ticket of the day, and Joel paused to watch the action for it was always a good show.

Doug had already yanked a file out of his desk drawer and was reading the "Summary" aloud to his audience. "Look here, Joel, this ticket is as urgent as they come." "That Location Awareness tool is too slow

Commented [JS23]: Run on split up

Commented [JS24]: Victims

Commented [JS25]: New paragraph Please

Commented [JS26]: Remove comma

Commented [JS27]: For the safety

Commented [JS28]: New Paragraph Please

Commented [JS29]: lowercase

Commented [JS30]: slide

Commented [JS31]: Run on change to period

Commented [JS32]: add comma and dialogue tag he said

Commented [JS33]: add comma

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for this kind of ticket!" "By the time you click all those buttons, and all that fancy stuff, this ticket's response time will have expired." Doug read the ticket off his screen, because he never printed them. The vent was back on, and Doug increased the volume of his voice so Joel, and whoever else that might be nearby, could see the show. "I have lost everything, there is no way out. The end is near. Please, God, make the pain stop." Joel realized the ticket was a special one categorized as a conversion. Conversions were where the ticket submitter was going through something very bad so that God could use that experience later to help another ticket. Doug was waving a file now. Reading with authority, "Dan. 62-year-old recovering alcoholic." He was paraphrasing the really long file with a dramatic effect that only he was capable of. Joel noticed that the file was a yellow folder, which meant it was a conversion in work. "See Joel, this is how these conversions work, just last year Dan was laying in a gutter dying of alcohol poisoning." Doug pulled the Review Questionnaire out of Dan's file and read, "Thank you, God, for saving me, let me know how I can repay you." Joel watched as Doug sat down and opened the Direct Dispatch link on his much larger 17-inch monitor. Doug was still performing and tilted the monitor towards him. In the God's Employee Name text box, he entered Dan Parks. The computer popped a warning box that said Employee "Dan Parks" was still in training and not ready for a Dispatch. Doug looking directly at Joel, clicked override. "The script is for the new guys," he commented dryly. Joel wondered what The Sky Master had read in the file that made him think Dan was ready to be dispatched despite the warning pop-up. Just more of the mystery. Joel didn't even see Doug hit the DISPATCH NOW button, but the way he leaned back in his office chair, it was clear he had.

Dan was on the way to Taco Bell for an early lunch with his wife who was a manager there. His 1998 red Jeep Wrangler was bouncing over the curb he misjudged as turned into the parking lot. Dan felt the calling of God's Will for the first time in his life. It was goose bump skin, watery eyes that cannot blink, warmth from the inside out as the command was given. Dan was waiting for this day but was not sure he was ready. Parking, he went in and told his wife that he had to go, and he didn't know where yet. She looked at him and asked if he went back to the bottle. He shook his head no and walked out of the Taco Bell. He got back in his Jeep and looked up at the sky, he didn't know how this worked. He wasn't given an address or a phone number to call. So, he sat there.

Doug suddenly leaned forward in his chair and let loose what most of us would call a bad word. Typing frantically on the computer keyboard Doug was doing what earned him the title of The Sky Master. Dan was looking out the driver's door window when he saw The Sky Masters clue.

It was the sign that blew out of the guy's hands who stood on the corner asking for money all day, who was caught by the news getting into a Mercedes and driving to his 300K house. The sign simply said,

**Commented [JS34]:** Indent for Dialogue and add tags

**Commented [JS35]:** By this point I think he was thinking KILL The Damn Commas as the paper has a large Slash thru it.

**Commented [JS36]:** Kill comma mark

**Commented [JS37]:** Indent dialogue

**Commented [JS38]:** KILL Comma

**Commented [JS39]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS40]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS41]:** indent

**Commented [JS42]:** Indent dialogue

**Commented [JS43]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS44]:** Run on split it up

**Commented [JS45]:** Lying

**Commented [JS46]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS47]:** Add : and indent

**Commented [JS48]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS49]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS50]:** Run on split it up

**Commented [JS51]:** Add comma

**Commented [JS52]:** turning

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“help if you can” and it blew down the road. Dan teared up as he followed the sign, the day was completely windless, yet this sign was blowing down the road at no less than 65 miles an hour. Dan stepped on the gas hard to keep up. He was turning into a residential area when the sign suddenly changed directions and lay flat. Dan slowly drove into the newer housing development and began to scan for the only info The Sky Master had sent him in the dispatch message.

There, the smoke was coming out of the garage and he could hear the accelerator full open on the car inside. Dan pulled into the drive way, stalling his Jeep as he exited in a hurry. Banging on the door yielded no reply. Dan walked around to the side of the garage and found the side door locked. Dan looked up at the sky, and audibly said “a little help here?” The Sky Master was on it. The door knob turned open and Dan walked in to see a 2018 Chevy Cruze, the windows were all down and the engine was at full tilt. The man inside was well dressed, he wore glasses of the type that you only find on people who had confidence in life, his oxford shirt was sky powder blue. Dan didn’t have to wonder what drove the man to this. He knew the defeat of success first hand. Dan quickly pulled the man from the car and dragged him out of the garage. He began to do mouth to mouth when Doug’s desktop notification popped up proclaiming Ticket # 13B1230 was now closed and a Review of his performance was being sent.

Joel heard Doug’s Desktop Notification chime, which was louder then his pc’s. The show was over. Joel turned back to his stack of urgent tickets.

Joel read Ticket # 13B1231 slowly, this one was not a simple one liner, it read “I don’t know how to be a Mom, and now your going to take my Mother away from me when I need her the most. My daughter is only two weeks old. Cancer isn’t fair. God *please* save my mother.” Joel typed in the ticket number into the search bar on his computer. It was just as he feared, “God’s Will” was a HUGE RED X. Joel, following the script, marked the ticket Tier 3, and hit forward. The day went on and Joel was on ticket 87 when Jason Delp showed up for the next shift, 15 mins early as usual.

Jason was what was called Tier 3 support, he handled the negative reviews and did the project management for tickets that were in violation of God’s Will. Joel thought that must be a horrible job and quickly clocked out for day. Jason was listening to the Sky Master tell him in arm waving animation about the ticket that he didn’t follow the script on when Joel walked out the door.

Jason got to work 15 mins early every day just, so he could get a turn over from The Sky Master, but really, he just liked to hear the stories. The shift started, and Jason sat down at the Sky Master’s Desk, he cleaned the soda can ring off the desk and logged in.

Commented [JS53]: Underlined no notes

Commented [JS54]: You are

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Ticket # 13B1231 elevated by Joel was the first one. Jason loaded the project management software that he uses to schedule the events to align with God's Will. He opens a new file and starts a 3-month time line.

Commented [JS55]: Tense shift

Commented [JS56]: Tense shift

He scheduled the ticket holder numerous visits to the hospital to be with her mom over the course of the 3-month schedule.

He scheduled the ticket holder's pastor's next few sermons to cover grief, loss, and a season of change.

Pausing, he pulls up his reference edition of God's Will, yep he can do that.

Commented [JS57]: Tense shift

He sent a dispatch now to the ticket holder's employer who just so happens to be God's Employee. It read's "Redo grievance policy to be two weeks paid time off".

Commented [JS58]: Tense shift

He then scheduled the part he hates the most, the last day on the time line. He schedules the ticket holder to be at the bed side during her mother's exit from the world.

He leans back in the chair and checked each scheduled task to ensure it is in compliance with God's Will. All green checks, Jason hits Commit Changes button, and sets the events into motion.

Jason clicked the Review Reminder application, where he spends the bulk of his shift. Today's reminder. This ticket is 6 months old and is due an answer. It reads "My dog got hit by a car, I prayed that God would save my dog, HE DIDN'T." "I would have given zero stars if the review would let me go lower than 1 star."

Commented [JS59]: KILL THOSE DAMN COMMAS! Was the thought the strike was large on paper

Commented [JS60]: Change to :

Jason gets up out of his chair and goes down the hall, exiting into the call center's back yard. Skipper came running to see him. Jason has been taking care of Skipper for 6 months now and he was very fond of him. Grabbing the hard-plastic ball with the internal LED he threw it and played fetch with Skipper in the darkness for a long time before realizing that he was still on the clock. He tells Skipper he will be back tomorrow and fills up his water bowl with fresh Holy Water. As he makes his way back to the desk, he was still thinking how lonely this shift was before Skipper showed up out of nowhere. Sitting down, Jason hits the "Reply to Review" button and loads the Location Awareness tool. The reviewer is in their car, "this one was going to be an easy reply" he thought to himself. Quickly changing the reviewer's car radio to turn on and broadcast the song by Garth Brooks - "Unanswered Prayers", while watching on the Location Awareness tool as it plays in the car.

Commented [JS61]: Large check mark no notes

Commented [JS62]: Looks like please cut this

Commented [JS63]: Caps

Commented [JS64]: Change to comma

Commented [JS65]: Kill it!

The reviewer is looking at the passenger seat, in tears by the end of the song, 6-month-old Skipper Junior is sitting there smiling with a knowing smile that only a dog with a purpose could have. Jason's Desktop notification pops up "Message Received" and auto hides after three seconds as the Location Awareness Tool resets its view.

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Jason clicked through the stack of Review Reminders, only finding 12 more low ratings, Jason sent four "Love's Open Door" by Julie Myers, and the rest got the standard "Unanswered Prayers." "An easy night" he thought as he was just logging out. Joel opened the door 15 minutes early for his shift looking ready for the day. Jason greeted him with his normal statement "Tag your it, God's Customers await."

Commented [JS66]: Add comma

Commented [JS67]: You're

Commented [JS68]: Change to period

Notes by Mr. Tuck

Jerimiah.

On: "God's Customers"

Your story made me think of two writers, one I like and one I dislike. More on that...

I thought first of Ray Bradbury because of the speculative nature of the story: worker bees in heaven tasked with sorting out God's menial tasks. I think it's a clever and interesting idea, and one that one of my idol's, Bradbury, would probably enjoy. That's about as good a compliment as I could give a writer perhaps.

Bradbury wrote a story—you should purchase and read his book *The October Country* by the way—called "The Scythe." In that story—I'll be quick—a family driving across the Midwest happens upon a farmstead in the middle of nowhere. In a beautiful old house they find a corpse holding a single grain of wheat and a scythe with something engraved on it like "he who wields me wields the world." All around the house are huge fields of wheat ready to harvest, but no one is there to work the farm. So they take up the farm. Anyway, he comes to learn that each strand of wheat stands as a person's life. With each sweep of the scythe, hundreds die. Another peculiar aspect is how fast the wheat grows back over night. Anyway. Read the story; read the book. You'd like it.

Another writer, one I mostly dislike, is George Saunders. I'll bet you'd like his book *The Tenth of*

December. I admire his imagination; I just don't enjoy his work. MANY people love him, however. That said, the specificity of detail you narrate with, and the specificity of how your imagination works reminds me of his work. You could probably read his story "Escape from Spiderhead Island" for free online. In that story he events drugs (if I'm remembering correctly). In your story, you create all this specific computer programming stuff and even a kind of heavenly bureaucracy. It's a very clever concept and one that I think you get sufficient mileage out of without over-taxing the reader—it's important to say. It was off-putting at first, but once you get the deal, we learn how the story "works" and then it becomes quite engaging and enjoyable.

In summation, I like your imagination and the clarity of detail you bring to this story (which is also reliant on an acute imagination).

Here's what I think this story needs...

Don't change any of the moments of the story where these workers intervene in people's lives.

But I think you need to cut Jason out of this story, big time. The reader needs/wants to be an ally of Joel's. I think it's Joel's story. I like the dynamic between Joel and Doug. Joel's a kind of new guy who aspires to be like the veteran. You know, even though it's heaven-esque, I'd like there to be a little more envy from Joel directed toward Doug.

I'm not saying do this, but here's a suggestion. Joel does very good work—nothing to not be proud of—but let's say towards pp. 4-5 it becomes clear that Joel is doing a lot of this in his particular way to impress Doug or to be like

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Doug or to get his attention or to get the attention of his peers as being as good as Doug, but no one seems to appreciate it for that, particularly Doug, who's maybe busy doing something even greater than Joel.

Then Jason comes in. Let's just make that Joel instead of Jason. Jason has a different approach. It kind of seems like he's phoning it in, even. What if after Joel's job going somewhat unrecognized, HE instead, just kind of phones it in the rest of his shift?

I don't normally like to make so specific a suggestion when it comes to plot. You don't have to accept this, but I DO want you to cut Jason, make it STAY Joel's story, and give Joel some kind of want/need that the reader can pick up on to make him more human/ sympathetic,  
Some technical stuff: Stop connecting full sentences with commas unless you're going to add in a conjunction. Use paragraph breaks more strategically and liberally. Indent for new paragraphs for back and forth dialogue. Give dialogue tags more frequently as well. And keep the verb tense consistently past throughout.

Imprint poem on a room – original turn in - Loose a third highlighted

### The Green Room

The nurses use it as punishment, threatening it,  
pointing to the heavy steel door, massive lock.

My rage continues, my mouth spews, my volume  
becomes the norm in every patient, chaotic bliss.

The nurses press buttons under desks, men rush  
to silence, contain, still, I am stronger.

"The room awaits" they shout, silencing most patients

I am fury, and wrath, I am justice.

The needle is fat, the liquid is cold,  
my rage dies and is replaced with death.

Tan door opens silently, the room is unknown,

Commented [JS69]: They

Commented [JS70]: to

Commented [JS71]: "

Commented [JS72]: "

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the floor is odd, neither solid nor liquid.

My feet explore the rubber, wavy and cold  
eyes do not see, hands touch vertical floor.

My screams are absorbed, ears never hearing myself  
nose smelling old rubber, skin feels the bounce.

Commented [JS73]: .

Commented [JS74]: darkness

### Letter Poem – original turn in- Loose a third highlighted

#### Dear Enemy,

Why do you fight? For religion, as they tell me? For Family, as I suspect? For country, as they disown you? I am shown a silhouette of you as I land on your soil. What do you see? My family is safe from you with me here; but is your family safe with me here? What do you see? Who shot first? What was the shot in a response to? I am trained to not miss, we count you as a kill. What do you count? When one of ours is killed or injured, we are angry and vengeful. When we rack up our next kill, it is seen as justice. What do you see? When I am relieved of duty for the day, by my brother in arms, who relieves you? We can watch the news and see progress in our fight. What do you see? Who tells you to continue the good fight? Will you be there tomorrow? I will be. A cold meal packed full of science to sustain my battle and cause, what will you eat? The bed is hard but supports my tired body and soon I sleep knowing my brother in arms has my back. Who has your back? I arise to an alarm clock that tells me to reengage the battle and relieve my brother in arms. Did you sleep? I shower yesterday's battle, careful to conserve water and dress for the next. Do you even have water? I tag out my brother with a quick smile and a joke about our counts and who's is higher. Are you relieved? Who shot first? What was the shot in response to? Why do you fight? Every trigger squeeze, the question burns my brain with the discharge of the shell as it lands silently in the sand of your soil and my kill count grows higher.

Mr. Tuck's notes

Jerimiah.  
"Dear Enemy"

Jerimiah. I've read this a few times, but I don't have anything substantive to offer. I think it's good. I thought about asking you to toy with line breaks to give it the look of the poem, and maybe you should. If you do, they should be longer lines, I think. I think longer lines would preserve the look of the "letter," and it would also give you a chance to create a little theater with strategically choosing where they will break, keeping the reader guessing at where this thing's headed. It might also help to make the refrains more obvious. I think I would keep it all one stanza.

OR

Just leave it as it is and make all the editing/punctuation changes I suggest.

Still, I think it's work experimenting with the form.

Commented [JS75]: Line Break

Commented [JS76]: Line break

Commented [JS77]: Not to

Commented [JS78]: Change to ;

Commented [JS79]: Remove comma

Commented [JS80]: Brother-in-arms

Commented [JS81]: Change to .

Commented [JS82]: Caps

Commented [JS83]: Brother-in-arms

Commented [JS84]: One space

Commented [JS85]: Re-engage

Commented [JS86]: Brother-in-arms

Commented [JS87]: Add comma

Commented [JS88]: whose

Commented [JS89]: add comma

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I like that the last line is the longest and most poetic and vivid image. I like the repetitions/motifs of this like the rhetorical questions. I like the symmetry of wondering how the enemy's experiences mirror the speaker's. Nice job. Very much hoping you submit this one to Renaissance, and I'm glad you're reading this one. You might read the list poem as well.

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Flash Fiction – revised turn in – Gain a third highlighted

### Memories of Ancestral Knowledge

By  
Jeremiah Stillings

The drive was over, and I pulled into the only available parking spot, much to far from the gates for my wife's liking. I announced "we are here" loudly to the two boys asleep in the seats behind me. I sat there for a moment wondering what this modern-day company Medieval Times really knew about the memories I hold. As I saw my oldest son's sleep depart, I wondered, if he too had these memories. Greeted and admitted, as we past the display of armor the knights would be jousting in, my memories came flooding back to me



There I was at my forge. Keeping the coal, the right temperature after adding three hard black bricks of new coal took work, planning, and a little luck on the bellows. My dog loved to watch me press my foot on the bellows and wait for the sparks float into the air like fireflies. It was almost comical the way he would watch the action. When he was a puppy he tried to catch the fireflies in his mouth but a hot one got him good and now he just watches. Over time I learned to place the new bricks under the delicate cracked grey bricks, because forge fire heats from the bottom up. It allowed me to use my forge for at least two extra hours each day. Many of my competition did not use this trick, and still placed the new bricks on top of the old. I can hear them from my forge, laughing, and drinking excessively while they *wait* for their forge's heat to grow. I have already made two sets of horse shoes for Issac Stauffer, who showed up just as I was retrieving them from the slack tub. He was happy they were still warm, for Pennsylvania was cold already,

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and he said chipperly “They should keep my hands warm on the walk back.” Why he never rode his horses, I will never know. Odd ones, those Mennonites, but they bring steady work.

There was always work for those willing to actually do it. Some of the richer folks wanted these new cast iron pots made. These were too expensive to do on a normal basis, and I make myself get payment up front, but always find that I use more in materials than I guessed the price would be. That’s the way of it, “How much they ask?” never considering the time it took me to learn this trade, the materials I must acquire, nor the actual pain in my left arm when I swing that six-pound hammer down on the metal, and it sends the shock right up the tongs into my arm. I often wonder if I should just hit my arm with the hammer instead but, that would be madness.



My youngest son was pulling on my hands to follow, and the memory’s faded to the now. My oldest looked as deep in thought about the armor as I, and I knew he had the knowledge passed down through the ages which enabled me to recall all the things that I have never done in this life, yet they are my ancestral memories; forever burned into my mind and now his.

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Short Story – revised turn in – Gain a third highlighted

### God's Customers

By

Jeremiah Stillings

The vent blew with a cool sort of heavenly mist mixed with a realism of modern day air conditioning. The vent was placed poorly by whoever designed this call center, and Joel had to grab at the stack of papers he was printing to prevent manual sort mode. Every day he clocked in his standard 15 minutes early so that he could print all his help tickets. Since it was Joel's first help desk job, he developed a routine to help him adhere to the strict script that he was made to follow on every help ticket.

First, he would print the work flow package, then he would highlight the tickets that were marked urgent. He placed these in a separate pile, so he could triage them with the rules that are a desktop link on his 14-inch monitor. A normal dayshift for him was about 84 tickets his supervisor liked to give him 90 to see if he was able to handle it. He grabbed the pile set aside as urgent and began to read each one very slowly. Speed was essential in an urgent ticket, but understanding the ticket took deep comprehension of the situation at hand, and that required the Situation tool. This suite of tools was a combination of ticket number and a live view of the situation that could be viewed in real time, like a helicopter filming a street chase.

The first ticket he read was going to need the situation tool. He looked over at his desk mate. The Sky Master was sitting there reading employee files, again. Joel did not know how Doug got his hands on those restricted files, but that just added to the mystery of his title as The Sky Master. He turned back to his incredibly small 14-inch monitor, pausing to remind himself with an inner thought that Doug's was a much larger monitor. As he tried to click the Situation tool icon, his mouse didn't move at all. Without missing a beat, he flipped the mouse over, and removed the tape that The Sky Master placed there every night before he clocked out as part of the initiation period for new team members. The Situation tool loaded up slowly, "too many moving parts" is what Doug had told him when he trained him how to use it, "I am better than him because of this tool" was repeating over and over in his head as it loaded. The new feature, Location Awareness, took the longest to load, but Joel really liked using it. It allowed him to see God's employees near the location of the help ticket submission.

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The map loaded, and the marker displayed the help ticket submission location for this urgent ticket. Clicking the marker, Joel could see the interstate 95, somewhere in Georgia. There was the ticket holder he was desperately trying to place a mattress on top of a minivan. Joel could see the issue right away: blowing in the wind of the passing cars, which barely noticed the mattress flopping into the road as it would slide off the roof when the minivan got up to highway speeds, were the broken tie-downs. The ticket read, "Make it stay." The check mark for "God's Will" was green, and Joel clicked the right-side bar where God's nearby employees showed up. The map slid off the screen in an overly dramatic way and Joel just chuckled at the time it took someone to do that. He scanned the list looking for an employee to dispatch. Kim was closest and showed up first, but she was a hair dresser. She was not likely to have the resources needed to assist. The next on the list was an employee with a gold rating. He clicked the rating to see why. Kevin Yothers earned the gold rating for missing a job interview to do God's Will when dispatched **and now worked two jobs to compensate.** Joel was amazed by some of the ratings on employees. **Once,** he found a link to a woman in Kansas who donated her only residence to a local family who were victims of a tornado and lost everything. The ratings never went into detail about what happened to the employee after following God's Will, but Joel knew it all worked out.

**The butcher shop where Kevin worked was about 2.1 miles away from the situation.** It was only 10 am where Kevin was, and Joel knew that if he dispatched him, Kevin would have to use his lunch break to go do God's Will. Joel weighed the options, "Could the ticket holder's ticket wait until **lunch time?**" Joel clicked the link to go back to the map and peek in on the situation. It would be lunch rush hour soon, and Joel decided that for the safety of those on the highway, **he was going to have to dispatch Kevin right now and he could not wait till Kevin's lunch.** Clicking back to the employee side bar, he was looking for Kevin's name when suddenly the Location Awareness showed an update.

Jeremy Clemmer was now an option. Clicking the link, he learned that Jeremy was a landscape professional who was traveling down the highway and would arrive at the location in a few seconds. Without a further thought, Joel clicked dispatch and typed *Stop and make it stay* into the pop-up window labeled "dispatch to employee" and hit the DISPATCH NOW button.

Jeremy was drinking a Mountain Dew and trying not to swallow his chewing tobacco that was tucked in his cheek when he saw the mattress slide off the minivan and flop onto the highway. He laid on the brakes and immediately hit the 4-way flashers. His trailer of mowers, trimmers, and blowers jostled roughly under the new command. He stopped with about 6 feet to spare. Throwing the soda bottle into the cup holder, Jeremy jumped out of the truck. His beard blew up into his face as the passing cars whizzed by. By this time, the mini-van owner was already at the mattress and trying to lift it back onto the roof. Jeremy

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walked over, assisting a little too late to do any of the lifting of the bulky thing. “How you going to make it stay?” he asked the man in his late 40’s who clearly had been driving 10 feet and having the mattress slide off repeatedly. The man gave him a look of total confusion, “I prayed to make it stay” was his answer. Laughing, Jeremy went back to his truck trailer and retrieved a good length of rope. He stood there looking at the lack of a roof rack and wondered how he was going to tie this thing down. The rope slipped out of his hand as he lifted the mattress off the roof and drug it back to his trailer where it fit neatly inside. Jeremy walked back to the man and picked up the rope. Spitting tobacco, he mumbled “You lead.” The convoy took off down the highway.

Joel got a desktop notification that Ticket # 13B1229 was now closed, and the Review questionnaire was being sent for his performance on resolving the ticket. Joel just nodded at the notification which disappeared in a few seconds. Joel could now see “The Sky Master” was doing his first ticket of the day, and Joel paused to watch the action, for it was always a good show.

Doug had already yanked a file out of his desk drawer and was reading the “Summary” aloud to his audience. “Look here, Joel, this ticket is as urgent as they come.” “That Location Awareness tool is too slow for this kind of ticket!” “By the time you click all those buttons, and all that fancy stuff, this ticket’s response time will have expired.” Doug read the ticket off his screen because he never printed them. The vent was back on, and Doug increased the volume of his voice so Joel and whoever else that might be nearby could hear the show. “I have lost everything there is no way out.” “The end is near.” “Please, God, make the pain stop.” Joel realized the ticket was a special one categorized as a conversion. Conversions were where the ticket submitter was going through something very bad so that God could use that experience later to help another ticket. Doug was waving a file now. Reading with authority, “Dan. 62-year-old recovering alcoholic.” He was paraphrasing the really long file with a dramatic effect that only he was capable of. Joel noticed that the file was a yellow folder, which meant it was a conversion in work. “See, Joel, this is how these conversions work.” “Just last year Dan was lying in a gutter, dying of alcohol poisoning.” Doug pulled the Review Questionnaire out of Dan’s file and read “Thank you, God, for saving me.” “Let me know how I can repay you.” Joel watched as Doug sat down and opened the Direct Dispatch link on his much larger 17-inch monitor. Doug was still performing and tilted the monitor towards him. In the God’s Employee Name text box, he entered Dan Parks. The computer popped a warning box that said Employee “Dan Parks” was still in training and not ready for a Dispatch. Doug looking directly at Joel, clicked override. “The script is for the new guys,” he commented dryly. Joel wondered what The Sky Master had read in the file that made him think Dan was ready to be dispatched despite the warning pop-up.

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Just more of the mystery. Joel didn't even see Doug hit the DISPATCH NOW button, but the way he leaned back in his office chair, it was clear he had.

Dan was on the way to Taco Bell for an early lunch with his wife who was a manager there. His 1998 red Jeep Wrangler was bouncing over the curb he misjudged turning into the parking lot. Dan felt the calling of God's Will for the first time in his life. It was goose bump skin, watery eyes that cannot blink, warmth from the inside out as the command was given. Dan was waiting for this day but was not sure he was ready. Parking, he went in and told his wife that he had to go, and he didn't know where yet. She looked at him and asked if he went back to the bottle. He shook his head no and walked out of the Taco Bell. He got back in his Jeep and looked up at the sky, he didn't know how this worked. He wasn't given an address or a phone number to call. So, he sat there.

Doug suddenly leaned forward in his chair and let loose what most of us would call a bad word. Typing frantically on the computer keyboard Doug was doing what earned him the title of The Sky Master. Dan was looking out the driver's door window when he saw The Sky Masters clue.

It was the sign that blew out of the guy's hands who stood on the corner asking for money all day, who was caught by the news getting into a Mercedes and driving to his 300K house. The sign simply said, "help if you can" and it blew down the road. Dan teared up as he followed the sign, the day was completely windless, yet this sign was blowing down the road at no less than 65 miles an hour. Dan stepped on the gas hard to keep up. He was turning into a residential area when the sign suddenly changed directions and lay flat. Dan slowly drove into the newer housing development and began to scan for the only info The Sky Master had sent him in the dispatch message.

There, the smoke was coming out of the garage and he could hear the accelerator full open on the car inside. Dan pulled into the drive way, stalling his Jeep as he exited in a hurry. Banging on the door yielded no reply. Dan walked around to the side of the garage and found the side door locked. Dan looked up at the sky, and audibly said "a little help here?" The Sky Master was on it. The door knob turned open and Dan walked in to see a 2018 Chevy Cruze, the windows were all down and the engine was at full tilt. The man inside was well dressed, he wore glasses of the type that you only find on people who had confidence in life, his oxford shirt was sky powder blue. Dan didn't have to wonder what drove the man to this. He knew the defeat of success first hand. Dan quickly pulled the man from the car and dragged him out of the garage. He began to do mouth to mouth when Doug's desktop notification popped up proclaiming Ticket # 13B1230 was now closed and a Review of his performance was being sent.

Joel heard Doug's Desktop Notification chime, which was louder than his pc's. The show was over. Joel turned back to his stack of urgent tickets.

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Joel read Ticket # 13B1231 slowly, this one was not a simple one liner, it read “I don’t know how to be a Mom, and now you’re going to take my Mother away from me when I need her the most. My daughter is only two weeks old. Cancer isn’t fair. God *please* save my mother.” Joel typed in the ticket number into the search bar on his computer. It was just as he feared, “God’s Will” was a HUGE RED X.

Joel followed the script but hated this part of his job. He loaded the project management software used to schedule the events to align with God’s Will. He opened a new file and started a new 3-month time line.

He scheduled the ticket holder numerous visits to the hospital to be with her mom over the course of the 3-month schedule.

He scheduled the ticket holder’s pastor’s next few sermons to cover grief, loss, and a season of change.

Pausing, he pulled up his PDF reference edition of God’s Will, to check if he could do something that sets him apart from Doug.

Sending a dispatch now to the ticket holder’s employer to take care of financial burdens was his claim to greatness. Doug looked over as Joel’s pc made a small ding when the dispatch now modal opened. He typed: “Redo grievance policy to be two weeks *paid* time off,” and hit dispatch now. Doug didn’t seem to care as usual, but Doug made more money than he did, and Joel liked to look after his own.

He then scheduled the part he hates the most, the last day on the time line. He scheduled the ticket holder to be at the bed side during her mother’s exit from the world.

Leaning back in his chair and checking each scheduled task to ensure it was in compliance with God’s Will, he saw all green checks, so he hit Commit Changes button, and set the events into motion.

Realizing that time was ticking by on those harder tickets, he clicked the Review Reminder application. Today’s reminder: This ticket is 6 months old and is due an answer. It reads “My dog got hit by a car, and I prayed that God would save my dog, HE DIDN’T.” “I would have given zero stars if the review would let me go lower than 1 star.”

Dog? It was about time to go see Ginger, telling Doug he was heading to the rest room. Joel got up out of his chair and went down the hall, exiting into the call center’s back yard. Ginger came running to see him. Joel had been taking care of Ginger for 6 months now and he was very fond of her. Grabbing the hard-plastic ball with the internal LED he threw it and played fetch with Ginger for a long time before realizing that he was still on the clock, and that Doug would be looking for him. “I will be back tomorrow girl” he said as he threw the ball one last time.

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Sitting down, Joel hit the “Reply to Review” button and loaded the Situation tool. The ticket reviewer was in their car, “This one was going to be an easy reply” he thought to himself as he quickly changed the reviewer’s car radio to broadcast the song by Garth Brooks – “Unanswered Prayers.”

The reviewer was looking at their passenger seat and was in tears by the end of the song, Ginger’s 6-month-old puppy Skipper was sitting there smiling with a smile that only a dog with God’s purpose could have. Joel’s desktop notification popped up stating: “Message Received” and auto hid after three seconds as the Situation Tool reset its view.

Joel clicked through the stack of Review Reminders, only finding 12 more low ratings, Joel then sent four “Love’s Open Door” by Julie Myers, and the rest got the standard “Unanswered Prayers, “ barely even reading them.

“An easy shift,” he thought as he was logging out to make room for the next shift who was 15 minutes early. Joel greeted them with his normal statement “Tag, you’re it.” “God’s Customers await.”

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Imprint poem on a room – revised turn in - Gain a third highlighted

### The Green Room

The nurses threaten it,  
pointing to the heavy steel door with massive sliding lock.

I go to meet it, as the other mental patients  
cower and contain what is putting me there.

The tan door opens silently, the room is unknown,  
the floor is odd, neither liquid, nor solid.

Bare feet exploring the wavy cold  
green bus seats from my childhood.

Darkness comes as the door closes,  
I scream my hello to the Green Room.

All introductions are absorbed, ears never hearing,  
My hands pound the same vertical floor in greeting.

Gasping for air to try again,  
the scent of those sweaty bus seats in summer assault me.

Raking my teeth over the seams of the panels,  
I no longer wonder what rubber tastes like.

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Letter poem – revised turn in - Gain a third highlighted

**Dear Enemy,**

Why do you fight? Is it for religion, as the news tells me? Is it for family, as I secretly suspect? Is it for love of country, as I watch them disown you?

As I land on your soil, I am shown a silhouette of you. I am told you are the enemy. What do you see me as?

My family is safe from you with me here. I question is your family safe with me here?

Who shot first? What was the shot in a response to? I am trained not to miss; we count you as a kill as another silhouette arrives.

When your kill count goes up, we are angry and vengeful. When we rack up our next three kills, it is seen as justice for your crime. What do you see it as?

When my shift is over I am relieved by my brother-in-arms. Who relieves you?

Back at camp, I can watch the news and see progress in our fight. Do you see progress?

Who tells you to continue the good fight? Will you be there tomorrow? I will be.

I eat a meal packed full of science to sustain my battle and our cause. What will you eat today?

My bed is hard, but it supports my body, and I soon sleep knowing my brother-in-arms has my back and that I am safe from you. Who has your back?

I arise to an alarm clock that tells me to re-engage the battle and relieve my brother-in-arms. Did you sleep?

I shower yesterday's battle away, careful to conserve water. Do you even have water?

I dress for today's shift with renewed strength. I tag out my brother-in-arms with a quick smile and a joke about whose kill count is higher. Are you back? Are you the same enemy from my last shift?

Who shot first? What was the shot in response to? Why do you fight?

Every trigger squeeze, the question burns my brain with the discharge of the shell as it lands silently in the sand of your soil, and my kill count grows higher.

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### Flash Fiction – Annotations

My changes to the flash fiction piece include a title change, a frame work change, and a special addition of my tattoo as a line break. The symbol for the tattoo was originally chosen for my belief that I held the memories of my ancestors. It is an endless loop to signify the passing of the memories on. This is called a work of fiction, yet these are my memories.

### Short Story – Annotations

My changes to the short story were a very hard blow. I was asked to cut Jason from the story. Jason was my best friend who died while I was at basic due to a car accident. I originally wrote him in as a peace of mind to myself of where he was.

As I cut his entire section out in the editor, I realized his work didn't have to go, just the name of who did it. I rewrote the story from the end of Joel's shift on to include Jason's work as a tedious task of Joel's job.

I added a lot of tension between Joel trying to prove he was as good or better than Doug.

When I had finished the changes, I published this to Amazon Kindle format. This short story now ranks in the top 300 of Christian fiction sold.

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**Amazon Best Sellers Rank:** #284,480 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store)

#288 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Literature & Fiction > Collections & Anthologies](#)

#358 in [Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Religious & Inspirational Fiction > Christian > Collections & Anthologies](#)

#13279 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Religious & Inspirational](#)

I am super excited to have workshopped this piece and I am glad I had the courage to make the changes needed.

### Imprint poem on a room – Annotations

My changes with this poem were the hardest because the original poem was not about WCW's mantra "no ideas but in things." I had written a very emotional poem that was dear to my heart as it was my real-life experience. Craig's feed back stated that he wished that this poem was not the sensory poem and that he wished I would explore it further in a different format. He was right. I had to redo the entire thing to fit this poems purpose.

As I removed all the lines that I was supposed to cut, I realized I could still tell the same story, but with a different perspective, being in it.

Normally I write a piece, save it, and leave it alone a while. Then go back and read it out loud. Then I rewrite the whole thing again. I do not have that luxury for this piece. It is raw but should demonstrate the fact that I grasped the concept of WCW.

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### Letter poem – Annotations

My changes to the letter poem were many. I think I have no less than 15 saved versions now. This is a real to my life piece of work about what I was thinking when at war in Iraq in 2003. Many servicemen never reach the state of awareness that I have reached to write this. Granted, 15 years later, as I could not have at that time. The requested changes were for format changes, but I had already made sweeping changes to end my connective tissue lobotomy that has been my turned in work.

The result is an odd mixture of a format I dislike, and the tissue added. The public reading day was almost adlib due to the weird format, because I had written it and redid it so much, I knew what was in my head but not on the paper.

I am going to drop what I read here

#### *Dear Enemy,*

Why do you fight? Is it for religion, as the news tells me? Is it for family, as I secretly suspect? Is it for love of country, as I watch them disown you? As I land on your soil, I am shown a silhouette of you. I am told you are the enemy.

What do you see? My family is safe from you with me here. I question is your family safe with me here? Who shot first? What was the shot in a response to? I am trained not to miss; we count you as a kill as another silhouette arrives.

When your kill count goes up, we are angry and vengeful. When we rack up our next three kills, it is seen as justice for your crime. What do you see? When my shift is over I am relieved by my brother-in-arms. Who relieves you? Back at camp, I can watch the news and see progress in our fight. Do you see progress? Who tells you to continue the good fight? Will you be there tomorrow? I will be. I eat a meal packed full of science to sustain my battle and our cause.

What will you eat today? My bed is hard, but it supports my body, and I soon sleep knowing my brother-in-arms has my back and that I am safe from you. Who has your back? I arise to an alarm clock that tells me to re-engage the battle and relieve my brother-in-arms. Did you sleep? I shower yesterday's battle away, careful to conserve water. Do you even have water? I dress for today's shift with renewed strength. I tag out my brother-in-arms with a quick smile and a joke about whose kill count is higher. Are you back? Are you the same enemy? Who shot first? What was the shot in response to? Why do you fight? Every trigger squeeze, the question burns my brain with the discharge of the shell as it lands silently in the sand of your soil, and my kill count grows higher.

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### Grade evaluation for all.

“Writing is a journey that is documented as steps to a shared vision between you and your reader of what you want to say.” – Jeremiah Stillings, 2018

#### Figure i

This document was almost completely finished by the time the new format in google docs was offered. I do not feel the need to redo the entire thing because it matches the original handout format.

I feel that I have said exactly what I wanted to say in these revised pieces

Request a grade of 100, with an overflow of 40 points extra credit to be applied to any who do not have the courage to ask for what they deserve and do not know their worth as a writer.