

Joel Brouwer

FATHER

Confronted with eye charts he'd fake a squint, then recite Lear letter by letter: *L-E-S-T I-T S-E-E M-O-R-E, P-R-E-V-E-N-T I-T O-U-T F-O-U-L J-E-L-L-Y!* The doctor shook his head, fidgeted with a clipboard. Night fell like a wheelchair dropped from a roof. Father said, *Beautiful day.* At home I propped him up in bed, whence he issued decrees: *Distinguished thing my ass! More light! We owe Asklepios a pot roast!* One night I caught him in the living room, winding back the hands of the moonlit clock and crying. *Pray undo this button,* he whispered. Then: *No, stay away. It's contagious.*

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