

Saved

You play in the dirt behind your apartment building. The morning sun, already high and hot, beats down on your crew-cut head. You have two toys: a plastic comb, teeth missing, and a plastic tank with truncated gun.

Your apartment is small. You are the smallest, so you sleep on the couch. One night, you roll off the couch in your sleep and wake on the floor, crying. You like the attention this earns, the affectionate concern. You roll off several more times, feign crying, and receive feigned affection.

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You play outside the building, sun reddening skin. You have the comb, the tank, the dirt.

The comb has sand between its remaining teeth, dust stuck to a thin film of grease washing will never remove. The comb is hard plastic, black.

The tank is a softer plastic, olive-drab speckled with white paint from how it has been stolen from its rightful owner-child, the tank secreted by the stealer in a pile of prunings later hacked and poured over with paint; hence, the stubby gun-barrel, the odd white camouflage.

The parents are told, when they ask, that the tank has simply appeared, has just been found— “Over there,” you point.

You have the tank, the comb, and a patch of combed dirt to run the tank through. Sunday mornings you have services at the Baptist church. You are unsaved.

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You wake on the couch one morning, the family gone, all up to Heaven in the Rapture, leaving you wandering from room to room of the tiny apartment.

“Mommy?” you say. “Daddy?”

The sun is bright in the sky.

“I want to be saved!” you cry when you awaken after rolling off the couch.

And so you are, baptized back-first. It is a miracle.

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You and your family move into a house. The comb loses all its teeth. The tank becomes old and battered. Most of the family is still saved.