

atmapper -

(Keep smoke through out)

Going into town -

Green fields like snow at Christmas  
of sage & thorns

smoke haze and

wavery heat

very hot & thirsty

hot dead ashes like confetti falling on the

town.

~~Green fields still decorated with yellow red peppers contracted with fields of dead grass with dust rising through the fire about thirty miles east.~~

"Now I got my doubts about that. We got bronchitis now and peppers coming out of ears.

Still smoking out there  
(smoking out - I do wish this smoke'd let up, she says. "You can hardly go outside to water your flowers without choking. People with lung problems don't go out at all."

fun  
He is just  
They always  
aged blue jeans, cracked one leg out to lean on. "Folks back there in Fargo just died & cotton to a preacher young as you."  
Started preaching when he was 5

pony tail, he  
the developing  
east wind  
He looked  
only weary  
Creek - Swanee County  
line.  
preach, he said  
before a dead  
a bait of these  
the price  
did be steeping in heat.  
More smoke.

"said the boy.  
A pretty boy  
up of shiny black  
light of me."  
"Take it personal."



His daddy before him  
preacher's grand daddy -  
had like wise preached  
and failed. Church <sup>on the south side of</sup> never <sup>paid</sup>  
paid the old man enough  
so he had to take a  
job with the rail road,  
working Sundays, till finally he  
lost heart.



The South side

Cornerville - not Stateville  
D. D. Jordan

# The Least Preacher

Long <sup>white</sup> hair caught back in a pony tail, he came <sup>slowly</sup> up the ~~side~~ <sup>creek</sup> bank, rising in the developing in the smoke ~~to~~ <sup>borne</sup> on the east wind off of the brown ~~shades~~ <sup>Okfenakes</sup>. He looked like a prophet of old, but not old, only weary in his <sup>longtime</sup> service to the Lord. Tomie Creek - Swannocke County line

more realistic  
more wily  
& cunning  
more ignorant  
than

"I don't know about you, preach," he said to the little boy sitting crosslegged before a dead camp fire, "but I've about had a bait of these woods." <sup>It is cool along the creek bed, but soon the green of the pines would be steeping in heat.</sup> More smoke.

Like (D. D. Jordan)  
Boy should be about

He kicked at the smoky wood. "More smoke." "I ain't preaching no more," said the boy.

is now  
learnin' better  
than to preach  
& findin' it no  
fun any way.  
He is just  
they always  
he is old

of about <sup>ten</sup> <sup>th' of rusty looking</sup> feet caps of shiny <sup>straight</sup> black hair. "Ist place, they made light of me." "Hey! Lister, boy! You can't take it personal." The man stuck his thumb in the <sup>belit</sup> <sup>corner</sup> of his faded blue jeans, cranked one <sup>long</sup> leg out to lean on. "Folks back there in Tays just ded & cotton to a preacher young as you."   
Started preaching when he was 5







my tent revival - main  
sitting in shade under irrigation, eating peppered  
tomatoes - See, boy, this is what the rain's  
gonna be like when you get done preaching in this  
fine place - (school still on - its May)

Nearly ~~meet~~ <sup>meet</sup> along the hot endless highway, they  
meet only a couple of log trucks loaded with huge sunny  
limbed trees, except for a white sports car going in the  
other direction.

The man turns in the wind of the ~~passing~~ <sup>passing</sup> car as if  
as if he's been blown into a spin. "Florida. I bet  
you a nickel, preach, they bound for Florida."

*paces  
or  
back* The boy's <sup>cow-boy</sup> boots click on the gravel. Burning  
up the soles and then expecting more shoes. "I ain't  
studying them." He walks on. (boy in shorts)

The man catches up. "Soon as we get to  
Cornersville, I'm gone get you a pop sicle. What say?"

The shifts the green canvas <sup>that must look</sup> satchel on his back.  
Doesn't answer <sup>which means okay,</sup> which means okay.  
Ahead there, <sup>around the curve, there's</sup> a <sup>sticking</sup> sound, softer than the buzzing  
of the locusts. "What you reckon?"

<sup>longer</sup> walking. "Some like rain, don't it."  
There's not a cloud in the sky only waver lines  
of heat rising off the asphalt & gravel.  
Around the curve they spy a line rainbow of spun  
water falling over a field. Red, yellow, green pepper,  
looks like.











drinking colas and jabbering in Spanish.

"Look at that, Preach, will you?" The man stopped, as was his way, to look. yet was as if he couldn't focus with his feet in motion. "You'd think we was in Mexico if you didn't know better."

The boy crossed the high way for the post office. He looked wilted & shrank into his wrinkled blue suit, (white shirt & tie) in spite of the having showered under the irrigation arm not 20 minutes prior.

(how is man dressed? Give him a name - Durkin)

Mopping sweat with his handkerchief, Durkin shoved through the glass door, out of the heat into the refrigerated coolness. His skin looked fried.

"Damn if that feel good," he said loud.

Behind the wall of black mail boxes with <sup>combs</sup> dials, they could hear somebody shuffling paper. A cardboard box slams onto the floor.

(Y'all got a tent?)

(Janeth Davis) (Dot Thinnin)

Pressing through the second door, they could see a gray haired stout woman with gray fixed hair stooping over a box with a yellow cutter. Bug eyed

(After 9-11 - Mexicans)  
she ~~had~~ hummed, "Be with you in a jiff."

"Take your time," said Durkin.

The boy reached high & braced his arms on the marble like <sup>work-former</sup> counter the better to see. Looked like ~~him~~ a mid get "U swanner, <sup>Preach</sup>, if you don't look like a mid get in a crown," she said, popping up & smiling, pushing a survey str and of hair from a Grayace.



A boy dropped his arms & stood ~~four~~ eye balling  
over the counter with his mean dark eyes.

"Doesn't he?" Dunkin' laughed.

"Little Mexican, huh?" She hummed a laugh.

"Preach? No." Dunkin' took stepped back to  
rise up ~~the~~ the boy. "But I been seeing a passel  
of 'em since we hit the city limits."

"Migrants." She rolled her eyes, stepped  
forward. Gray pants clinging to her huge hips &  
a cream nylon shirt. Huge bosom. Dunkin'

Boy carrying  
Bible  
back left  
at waist

couldn't take his eyes off of ~~it~~ them.  
(Bible on counter, staring over)

"Big on produce farming hereabouts, huh?"  
"Bout took over the county." She peeped  
over the counter. "Well, if you ain't a cutie  
in that suit!" ~~Can't you be by human~~ "Ain't  
you bout to burn up in that ~~get up~~?"  
"He's a preacher, ma'am." Dunkin' said

at solemn.  
"Why, he's just a baby."

"Hey, lady, it's me going on ter."

"Now, boy," said Dunkin'. Then to the  
woman. "He's just messing with you ma'am.  
He ain't but rever."



tilted her head. "I'd say so." Her  
face rolled & dipped, & mingling with that humming  
laugh: "The least preacher in the world."

"Come here to pray up a rain," Durkin  
said.

"Pray up a rain, huh?" She leaned on the  
counter, breasts like ropes. "Well, honey, we  
could shore use one. But I figure when the  
good Lord'll send one when he's good and  
ready, what'll say."  
She was going down on them, Durkin could

tell: "Being the least preacher in the world, he's  
got a pure heart. You know what the good  
book says. Read to her, read it for the least  
pretty lady, preacher."

The boy, still staring mean, slid the black  
Bible from the counter & peered down, flipping  
pages, with only the top of his damp black  
head showing.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me for  
such is the kingdom of heaven."

"I declare," she laughed. "But, honey, one  
being a Sunday school teacher my self I'd say



could be meant another way."

"You don't reckon?" said Duncan. "I tell you what a God-fearing woman like you could certainly be instrumental in putting together a revival in a place like this -"

"I don't know about..." She looked behind her at the other then back again. "Weather in these parts could use a revival."

"Not to mention a little rain, right?"

Now that I got my doubts about... Sounded of ~~she~~ like she was swallowing bubbles.

~~But what if~~ "Lady, you married?"

Duncan leaned closer. "Well, I..."

"Don't mean to get personal with you, ma'am. I'm about to make a point." "The good Lord called them home, well, it was the month ago."

"Ah, I hate that. Don't you preach?"

The boy was hiding behind the counter, sucking his thumb & batting his black eyes. Duncan eased the thumb from his mouth. "I bet you're lonely." "It makes da."

"I guess y'all got a tent, huh?"

"Well, ma'am I'll tell you; we do but ain't no call for a tent when it ain't raining."



spaces. That is preacher & pulpit - y  
the stars. Moon for light. When it's up - y

Listen, y'all  
Phone rings. - comeback  
Listen, y'all mister ...

"Dunkin"  
"Mr. Dunkin. Would I been thinking, wouldn't I  
hurt to have a lil ole boy like that preaching to  
the heathen ... migrants. Just might be the  
ticket. And if a lil ole rain just happen to blow up, wouldn't  
(he has to convince her about the rain)  
hurt nobody's feelings, I'm here to tell ya."  
"Wouldn't, no ma'am!"  
"Where y'all staying at?"  
"Well, ma'am, we generally camp out under a bridge."  
"Nooo!"  
"Yes ma'am. Preacher claims it puts him in  
touch with the lord on a regular basis."  
"Through that?" she slapped the counter, wedder  
ring clanking. "I'd like to see if 'all home with me if I were a widow."  
"If all come home with me." how people talk.  
"I was a strange and  
corn bread & peas. Like  
The boy finished, "you took me in." On  
on in a bored tone. He knew it by heart.  
(don't look into like a sister ??)

Folks is kind?  
tender hearted  
some 9-11  
know what  
mean?

The church green to let  
the people  
to pray  
Why that boy ought be in school

W'd feel good  
I was in the slammer if you visited me  
Hey, that's cute. Just the kind of  
thing a yomeerin gonna hook onto what with  
the television all the thing.  
He's hanging  
third, wanted  
a place to  
stay



them to come back tomorrow - they talk to  
preacher about  
bible the boy preach at the Baptist  
possible for preacher - Mexicans coming in  
10  
They in her  
read the migrants

They hear preacher looking <sup>up</sup> people  
in purple <sup>skin</sup> but he seems in a better mood.  
His tongue

Bible under his arm  
one  
"Key! Now am I s'posed to get across to them?"  
"Post <sup>the lady</sup> ~~madness~~ <sup>scold</sup> them in school's speaking  
pretty good English."

Dunkin' tried that crowd out. They frowned,  
stared, nodded, headed out the door, going back  
at the strange little man in the blue suit.  
"They wouldn't come no how," Dunkin' said, <sup>peering</sup> <sup>out</sup> "Door?"

Coke from a can. He heads out the door.  
"Give you Bible, boy."

They go back after their back packs, <sup>map</sup>  
then head west again, <sup>part</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>crossing</sup>  
Ahead they can see the river bridge and  
the right the same heat wavy glittering concrete  
of head stones I said.

"Looks like she wouldn't let her go home with  
her, Dunkin'." The boy is now running to  
catch up. <sup>Heat</sup> <sup>clucking</sup> on the hot pavement.  
smell I

Dunkin' throat feels swollen he's so hot & tired  
and he's in no mood to humor the boy. Who strongly



Dunkin when he acts like he don't  
dama. "Preach or don't," he says, "I don't  
dama. "Man run off and left you & me  
enough to take you in."

"She'll be back, Dunkin, you said she would." The  
boy's head on hung & he's gazing down at his feet.

"I know that sorry sister of mine, she won't."

But you said one of you'd just strike out & make a  
little cash, then hook up with again in Jacksonville."

Cemetery on the right, Dunkin looper off down the  
dead weeds of the ditch on his left, just getting it.  
The boy ran, trying to catch up. "You said it, didn't  
you?"

"I said it. I said a bunch of stuff. But that was  
before 9-11."

"9-11. What's 9-11 got to do with anything?"

"You heard the lady at the post office --  
people changed. Ain't no job for one thing. People's  
scared, for another." He stopped, staring out at  
the slow flowing brown creek with the brown water &  
took a deep breath. "Need the Lord's what they need.  
Need a boy like you to show em the way."

"Why me?"

"You Dunkin placed a hand on top of the boy's  
damp head. "You young. Ain't all full of piss &  
vinegar yet. Got a pure heart."

Dunkin walked off, mumbling. "Come all you  
got a interest in is some old computer box of noise."



same boy. Am I nothing wrong with that,"  
 "Some'd ~~be~~ say so, some'd say not." Again,  
 Warkin stopped at the <sup>ruffled</sup> edge of sand <sup>lightly</sup> & lapped water.  
 "Don't you bet they've been a many a baptism  
 in this ole river?"

# #

\* Word at her word, next day when they went to  
 the post office, the lady had good news for them.  
 "Bubba over!" she called out from the back. "Be  
 with you in a minute."  
 "It's us ma'am," Warkin at the least

preacher.  
 She just popped ~~out~~ <sup>the dog</sup> like a herlesque  
 dancer ready to dance. "He said <sup>you could testify at</sup>  
 "Yes." Warkin tried to high-five her but <sup>she said to tell you to come to</sup>  
 she didn't catch on. "What about that, <sup>Church.</sup> <sup>Sunday School.</sup> <sup>you can be</sup>  
<sup>in my class!</sup> <sup>preach?</sup>  
<sup>she</sup> <sup>clapped</sup> <sup>her</sup> <sup>hands</sup>  
<sup>the</sup> <sup>most</sup> <sup>wanted.</sup>

Rollerdeck of fugitives - the most wanted.  
 "Sunday, y'all come to the Baptist church,  
 left of the crossing, pret the court house square.  
 Now don't think Bro. Shawn is gone see top  
 the whole hour, cause he ain't. But being who re  
 you he's took me at my word that this boy here  
 know the Bible - "She looked around Warkin. "You hear,  
 boy, you do dog don't you."



...turned some eyes for no good reason that Duke could tell  
Dunkin answered for him -

it since he was 5.  
boy looked around at him, then went back flipping the blanched, scared faces of the women together, while Dunkin & the woman talked. Boy slips picture out & slides into his (Billie) <sup>was used to the boy's mood'n. The boy was used to this</sup>

What the church was hoping to do was raise a little extra cash for the fund in NY who lost loved ones on 9-11.

Everywhere Dunkin & the boy had been was the same. Scraps from the love offering was most by what they'd come to expect. He could feel the boy's eyes drilling into his back.

"I tell you ma'am," <sup>speaking low,</sup> "Preach here's been on the road for a good while now." He whispered, "Mama got killed a while back." Then louder, "He was kind of hoping for one of those Game Boy Singers. Know what I mean?"

"One of them games play that some music faster & faster."

"Well, I don't know... al..."

"That's it," said the boy, <sup>growing</sup> stepping up to the counter with his bible, preacher style, clutch'd under one arm.

...



thorow, you gone ruin yourself, you  
to be merry with that stuff. <sup>What</sup> All you  
need's right in there. "She <sup>shook her finger at</sup> ~~thumped~~ the Bible

"Come on daddy," the boy said, slinging  
his head <sup>toward the door</sup> ~~back~~ "Daddy <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>bring her back</sup> ~~bring her back~~.  
Daddy <sup>was</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>bring her back</sup> ~~bring her back~~.  
Hold it! Hold it! The woman leered  
across the counter. "How much one of  
them things cost, <sup>you</sup> all know? We been  
buying Teddy bear - such for <sup>them</sup> ~~them~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>our</sup> ~~our~~ <sup>children</sup> ~~children~~  
younguns - - to send <sup>up</sup> ~~up~~ <sup>there</sup> ~~there~~. <sup>Beckon</sup> ~~Beckon~~ <sup>me</sup> ~~me~~  
could chip in a little for one of our own."  
# # #

(preaching for rain -) go back - people want to  
talk about 9-11, they want to bring up that  
old sad feelings & make themselves grow mellow  
with pity - - (the rain will come. Durkin is  
wise, says but that 's water under the bridge,  
beg your pardon ma'am. This place is about to  
dry up & blow away. She wants boy to tell about  
his mama dying & him getting saved. <sup>Decided to go out &</sup> <sup>raised money for the</sup> <sup>of phase of 9-11</sup>  
(most wanted picture is Durkin or mother  
(Durkin has hidden knowledge of mother)  
to help boy - doesn't know why dead is - - Durkin is  
god - - need back ground on boy & Durkin

\* \* \* boy turns out to be a real preacher  
all Shurston type - <sup>get money for</sup> ~~get money for~~



no) (Cape, eyes, ~~stupid~~ ~~stupid~~ ~~stupid~~)

Go back: "Are y' all stoned?" Durkin, shouted, standing on the pier ready work by the Alapaha. "If you died tomorrow, would you know you're going to heaven?" (river is more sand than water)

bible reading - boy - "and a child shall lead them" back round on Durkin - did he need to be a preacher?

Nothing silly - but keep o' corner perspective

Go back - where woman says it'll rain by when ~~the~~ Lord Lord see fit - "besides origation is all the thing now." (She says the boy can testify) "I'm fried up, stomping his feet, tantrum-style. "I'm fried up, I'm ready to go." Suddenly he stops & faces the congregation and says "low, what about you, sister & brother? are you ready?"

Bible

Somebody cackles. A woman says, "precious. Just

no podium running along aisle

precious "Well it like it is, preacher; Durkin on his feet, shouting

He sits in his pew on the third row, left, and everybody all eye on him.

As usual the preacher tells about how his mother died of cancer and he took up with his <sup>half brother,</sup> uncle Durkin. Got saved & hit the hard road to spread the Gospel.



at side, walking boy pulls photo with two hands it to a woman  
Mother wanted for runway drugs from Columbia to the U.S. <sup>well, she could show up in JAX.</sup> 16

A summer - at atmosphere - Katy Duke  
\* to pick up the thread of story, need to go back  
1st p.o. visit. Remembered preach & Durkin are walking  
into town - make believable rather than dramatic  
- first they check in at post office for info. about preaching.  
place needs rain - bad - but she's under still caught  
up in fund raising for victims family's 9-11 -  
- Durkin (background) always wanted to be a preacher,  
tried to preach but gave up after concluding he wasn't  
truly called. The spirit was there and besides he could  
never leave the women alone. "Gotta leave the women  
alone," he tells the least preacher. "Gotta have a  
hook to preach. Can't catch a fish with out a  
hook, or else be called. You can be the oldest or  
the youngest, the ugliest or the prettiest, but one  
thing you can't be is a plain ole fish if you  
haven't been called."

\* writer of with them into town - Minut Market  
after p.o. \* \* really the "po lady" is never entered  
in preaching to heather or young people, only her  
9-11 victim fund - usually boy tells about his mother  
dying & his getting saved, pitiful stories. She wants  
him to soften the town up by talking about 9-11.  
his price - a Game Boy ("If you want earthly rewards for their  
good works, ain't that how it goes.")

- ending - leaving town Game Boy judge on five  
(he has learned in this town that his mother is in the  
run for drug dealing (going to Columbia to pick up  
drugs & wanted in the USA)  
so back in Minut Market there is a newspaper picture taped to wall -  
the woman raising it & a bunch of school children 132.10  
for 9-11 victims)

so back - American flag flying - men with caps & T-shirts  
America - Born in the USA. America kids are.  
\* standing under the irrigation looking out at the green &  
red & yellow up at the blue sky & a perfect rainbow.  
"Ain't it a pretty world, boy? face wet" "Maker a man hate to leave it."  
But it fits we heave gonna be like this



Time to shake the dust off our feet, Preach." 17

key area & needed in town - (no same boy?)

Maybe the woman says "good", "today down  
under the bridge or down up as they are leaving  
hands it out the car window - They walk off,  
Same boy jungle

Boy testifying  
usually stomping up & down the aisle,  
telling how hot the hard road with  
his Uncle Dunkin to preach. ~~the gospel.~~

"If ain't wanting nobody's pity no more.  
My (something prior to this testimony or confession <sup>Boy shows picture & more</sup> ~~has happened from~~  
or Dunkin does it) - stands <sup>Boy & people</sup>  
he's speaking for the boy - He's Boy in  
tired of <sup>the road</sup> preaching, ready to retire from being  
the least preacher. I guess he wasn't called <sup>He falls</sup>  
anymore than me. I'm the one called him. <sup>asked</sup>  
he was good at it. Know the bible like the back <sup>holding</sup>  
of his hand. Wouldn't be surprised if he couldn't <sup>it</sup>  
pray up y'all some rain. But looks like everywhere <sup>with</sup>  
we go here lately people got an itch to talk about <sup>said</sup>  
the ~~hot~~ big bombs in NY. Well, we ain't never  
even been to no NY; ain't hardly been out of  
La. We preach to the needs of the place  
me happen to be at. Like Jesus done.

# # #



aturday night, camped out under the bridge, Dunkin  
 sits <sup>huddled</sup> listening to the purring of the river - stars overhead,  
 no moon, no sign of rain. Earlier, before sundown,  
 the dry east wind had quit blowing but a haze still  
 drifted in layers across the dark water and standup  
 (the gray) silhouette of trees. ~~The trees~~

He watches the boy <sup>across the</sup> curled asleep <sup>on his gun wood pallet</sup> with  
 his back to the fire. Boots off & bare dirty toes  
 nestling.

Tomorrow morning those same feet will be  
 stomping up & down the aisles of the Baptist Church in  
 his cowboy boots. Heating up for a sermon, after  
 which the two of them will hike out west, seeking little  
 towns with people willing to hear the little preacher preach.  
 His long pack <sup>clatters</sup>, <sup>relax</sup> the boy stretches long and rolls, facing Dunkin.

The thumb of his right hand is poised over his packing  
 lips as if he is sucking them in his dream. In his left hand  
 is a white card - from across the fire Dunkin can  
 see a woman's <sup>black and white</sup> image and print. What? He watches for  
 a minute then creeps around the <sup>slight</sup> fire to the feet  
 of the boy and carefully reaches over & plucks the card  
 from his hand. His fingers tingle but he sleeps on.

On the far side of the fire again Dunkin leans  
 close to the light; staring at the postage stamp size  
 picture of his younger sister, ~~the~~ preacher's mother. It shows  
 blond hair, shapely face and a smile that lights up her  
 pale eyes. The print reads, Bethorn Staples, wanted for



19  
of drugs from Columbia to the U.S. Post  
in an airport vicinity of Greater Jacksonville  
Fla. Anybody Reward for information leading to her  
capture & arrest.

Kneen up again, Dunkin sits twiddling the  
card between his fingers.

"Dang it all, boy," he says slow.  
Whiponville, frogs, Katy didd.

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testimony at church from Dunkin

---

Jan. dew heart (food)  
Monday morning, Dunkin wakes the boy with a  
start. He sits up, staring up at Dunkin, then  
out at the slow river and pecks of sand. His hair  
is sticking up, one sprig on the crown (pushed up back)  
white forehead.

"Time to shake the dust off our feet, boy," says  
Dunkin, leaning over to stir the corned beef hash in  
the small black skillet over the fire. It smells good,  
real breakfast. Last night they'd had katen weiners & beans  
and grape pop sicles, <sup>before they got to the river</sup> The boy could live on grape  
pop sicles.

Packed up & ready to roll west, Dunkin leads out up  
the weed choked slope by the near the end of the bridge, <sup>Statenate</sup>  
side. <sup>trudgers</sup> The boy behind him. The dead grass is dewy and <sup>orexin</sup> purple



grow there in clusters.

~~the~~ Where the bridge meets the highway, they ~~up before crossing~~, waiting for a small white car to cross ahead of them.

The car slows, pulls off ~~to the side of the~~ <sup>on the shoulder</sup> the road & stops not ten feet from Dewah and the boy.

"Yoo ho," the driver calls, waving & out steps the post office lady in khaki pants & a blue Oxford shirt she has to tug down over her great hips & stomach. She reaches back inside and pulls up ~~what~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~thin~~ <sup>gray metal</sup> box & comes high stepping through the veranda to where Dewah & the boy are waiting.

"For you," she holds out the box to the boy.

"He takes it, eyes wide & almost smiling." "Same Boy."

"Well, it is the least I can do." Already she is headed for her car again, stepping high in black pumps & stockings. "All these teddy bears & stuff for <sup>you</sup> young'un's who'll likely laugh at what we send."

She ~~drives~~ gets into her car, backing ~~into~~ <sup>onto</sup> the ramp of the cemetery road, then forward & back towards town,



Rank in the lead system to the same  
 by size <sup>cray wagon type</sup> gauge, growing faster & louder before they  
 reach the other end of the bridge.