

GRASHAWPUR NUHPSHULZ
(ANUH KUHPULUH UHTHUR STOREEZ)

BY

CLARK J. SHELDON

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English
University of Manitoba
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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foreword

I think at the outset it's important to note one detail in specific. I didn't write the stories that you've all about to labour through out of a theoretical standpoint: it was really more experimental. There wasn't any specific theory from which I viewed the project before me. It was simply an exercise in voice. I wanted to tell a story from the perspective of an elderly man from somewhere in the prairies. I didn't even really know if the character had been a farmer or a pioneering neurosurgeon. But the people who heard it received it with positive feedback. It was first person narration, with proper spelling and a scarcity of contractions. To me it was pretty clearly an old man *writing* – which was not what I wanted.

I needed to do something different, something to mark the language off as conversational – or at least a monologue. Something spoken, at the least. I wanted to switch senses – I wanted the eyes scanning the page to *hear* the words as they were in my internal voicing, in my memory. I knew right off that “proper” English (and you can bet the quotation marks on that are strong) didn't allow the imaginative generation of the sounds I was after. People defaulted to reading the language in whatever their own accent was. They heard the language as they spoke it.

In Interfaces of the Word, Walter Ong writes “text as text is essentially dead. For texts are there to produce words, which are irreducibly sounds, realized orally either in

externalized utterance or in the interior imagination” (258). People came to the text with their own sounds in mind.

I set out to try to see how the kind of specific prairie voice I was after had been realized in print. That lead to a considerable amount of literary panhandling – I’d sieve novels like some ruddy old prospector after nuggets of gold. Obviously, my gold was what I took to calling “mimesis.” Mimesis, as I use it in this case, can be thought of as the voice of the character, rather than the narrator. In general, you can think of it as the narrator’s voice mimicking the voice of a character. I was disappointed by the scarcity of my findings – but I’d staked a claim, and I was going to work it for all it was worth.

W.O. Mitchell, Margaret Ostenso, Stephen Leacock, Margaret Sweatman, Robert Stead, Rudy Wiebe, John Marlyn, Ernest Buckler. I chose to read the novels of the era I planned to set my prose in. And somewhere in there, early on, I found Barry Broadfoot. He’d managed to come closer to what I hoped to do than any of the novelists. The novels were largely what one expects when one picks up a novel – certainly what one expected when the authors I just listed were writing. I think still to this day that it’s a common expectation of prose: third person narration. Narrators who conveyed a story linearly, with a Victorian sense of delivery and structure. Obviously Mitchell can be exempted from that statement, as can Sweatman’s Fox, although The Sacrifice is another matter. The narrators allowed – somewhat disdainfully, at times, I think – the characters to misspeak, repeat, elide, stammer, mis-start, mistake and to show their own educational inadequacies. The authors themselves I believe intended no mockery, but it can be found in the tone of the narration, nonetheless. All of these interjections of dialect are surrounded by long passages of the narrator’s diegesis.

To draw a few examples from some of the authors already mentioned:

Buckler's The Mountain and the Valley p180:

"I guess they worked together more ways'n one," Ben said. "Half them kids o' Freem's was Reuben's."

Stead's Grain p111:

"'Twasn't nothin'," he [Gander] said. "Anybody 'ud o' done it."

Ostenso's Wild Geese p128:

"Yes – and long enough. I'm near dead, I'm so lonesome," she [Dora] fretted.

"This is the slowest place on earth. Nothin' ever happens except the weather, and it's rotten most of the year."

Ostenso's Wild Geese p136:

"Vell – so I vill come one day vhen he iss home. The stinker!" she [Mrs. Sandbo] said emphatically.

Marlyn's Under the Ribs of Death p40:

"You don't deserve to eat anyhow," the second boy exclaimed. "You didn't bring nuthin'. Flowers! I saw watcha brung. A buncha flowers. I betcha you stole 'em."

Mitchell's Jake and the Kid p9:

"Stumick all squoze up?"

Mitchell's Jake and the Kid p14:

"Wiv 'is tail not cut off?"

Mitchell's Jake and the Kid p14:

"If they ain't we kin paint 'em."

Compared to what I've done, these come as pretty easy to understand. The final "g"s get dropped, and certain phonemes get elided into invisibility. They are fairly limited in the amount of play they allow themselves. And yet these were all obvious intrusions into the narrator's voice. They were included as parody, as snide mimicry. Note the difference between the language of character and narrator here: following the "I'm so lonesome" of speech comes the word fretted – which people hardly use in speech. The "iss" spelled to prolong the sibilance, followed by "emphatically." "Watcha" and "betcha" follow closely after "exclaimed." There is a stark contrast between the types of diction.

Broadfoot took a bit of a different route – perhaps because he was after personal histories. In his effort to preserve "Memories of Canadians who Survived the Depression" (the subtitle of 10 Lost Years), Broadfoot also managed to effectively preserve some of his subjects' vocal habits. This is not to say that Broadfoot recorded words perfectly, and simply played the part of tape recorder. He openly admits he "had to do some editing of most interviews." He found such editing necessary "because people just do not talk simply and economically. Listen to anyone tell a story and you will understand; they ramble" (10 Lost Years, vi). The elisions Broadfoot inserts to show the elimination of tangents actually took on the effect – at least in my reading – of pauses taken by his subject, either for breath or for thought-gathering. For the most part, Broadfoot did his best to stay out of the way, and let the voices speak for themselves.

Now the obvious difference between the works is length. Ostenso's Wild Geese is a relatively long novel. Even the individual episodes that form chapters in Jake and the Kid were quite long, in comparison to the brief pseudo-quotations Broadfoot offers. What

I hoped to do – even before I’d read them – was to create a hybrid of the Realist prairie novel and the voices latent in 10 Lost Years. I wanted to test that voice, to see if it had the sustainability of the narrators’ voices in Realist prairie novels.

In their first drafts, the stories I wrote really weren’t that much different from F.P. Grove, who I found avoided any linguistic “improprieties” scrupulously in Fruits of the Earth. I was committed to the same system I’d been hoping to escape, or at least to subvert. As I revised and rewrote – and revised and rewrote – elisions started creeping in. Something like “it was also” took a hop to “ihwas also”, a skip to “ihwuhz also” and a jump, arriving at “ihwuhzawlso.” Not really a “word” persey, any longer, simply a phonemic collection. I progressed steadily. I had time to adjust to each new set of changes. In large part the stories are part of the process, I suppose. Yes, I took time to adjust the sounds to these typographic atrocities on the page – but the reader, I know, must take the necessary steps to decipher, to un-code, all at once.

But as Saussure pointed out – all language is a sign. I’ve simply torn down many of the signified-signifier relationships we’re used to. I can’t count the number of rolled eyes I’ve had when I turn texts over to someone to read. Some have been annoyed, some completely mystified – unwilling or unable to re-code the language they’re used to. The claim has been made that this spelling is artificial. Of course it is. Of course. It is. But no more so than “proper” English, which is only “proper” or “natural” based on an appeal of commonality. My treatment (not my mis-treatment, just my treatment) of English is not *more* artificial – it’s just unfamiliar. I’m trying to highlight the oral occupation of a visual space.

Can I ever hope to create a purely oral literature? No.

I can never hope to see the wind, either. But if I throw blades of grass or blow the grayed head of an old dandelion, I can get a better understanding of it, something that at least indicates what the wind is doing.

Ong, referring to highly oral cultures embarking on a textual pathway, wrote “the written words have to be mouthed aloud, in their full being, restored to and made to live in the oral cavities in which they came to existence” (Interfaces of the Word 259). That’s a fair description of what my intent was; to strip language back and reassemble it more in keeping with a specific dialect.

The question to me become one of distance – how far could I push the dis- and remantling? Not so long ago, I conceived of a version of these stories with no paragraphing, punctuation, or capitalization. Simply spaces of varying lengths to indicate pauses, breaths, et cetera. In those versions “uh”s and “um”s and other stammers would have had free play – but it would have been complete gibberish. I don’t know – maybe you all think I’ve crossed the line already. During the circulation of my proposal one reader suggested the whole thing “may well be unreadable.” She based her opinion on the seven phonemic groupings that comprised my title. I defend myself simply by citing my testing – those I tortured with it, could read it. They didn’t always want to – but if I asked them to work at it, they could do it. An interesting, and frequent, occurrence was my test-reader would begin to sound the various phonemic groupings out – assembling them into words their minds recognized. Each word became reflected upon. At least at first, until the system became internalized. To revisit my earlier example: once “ihwuhzawlso” was uncoded back into the three “proper” English words, the reader tended to understand the

difference between the two forms – he or she understood the sounds of elision, et cetera, that I intended.

What I hope I've helped to do is to give a prairie dialect a respected place of its own. Yes, prairie dialects have shown up in prose, not to mention poetry, where the occurrences are more regular. But the difference, and I hope you've seen it, is by using the dialect – or idiolect, rather, if you take each story on its own – to tell the stories, I've used some of the preconceived notions of reading to endow it with a credibility. The type of prairie dialect is the constant, so it's the norm.

The language of the Realist prairie novel is clear. One can glance inside many of the novels and find examples of prairie speech being equated with borderline idiocy. Just one example occurs when the brave behaviour of one character is described by the recipient of his heroism as "chivalrous." A third character mistakes the word for "shiverous" and thinks the hero must have gotten cold due to the inclement weather. Clearly in such a scenario the author/narrator has positioned dialect in a subordinate position. The narrator has used regional speech not for simple levity – but for a satiric undercutting, to position a hierarchy of language. It's the same way Norm, the narrator of "Blewmurz" depicts "suhm slavihk bihch" screaming "Dair keeleeng heem! Dair keeleeng heem!" in a cartoonish accent. The same linguistic snobbery Norm shows is just what his voice would have been subjected to in one of the prairie novels I've been speaking about. Remember the example I've already given from Ostenso, the "v" instead of "w" and the double "s."

Another point I need to make absolutely clear is that this is not an attempt to represent a "dialect." I mention this in the preface – this isn't the voice of anyone and

everyone in our region. It's simply a version of the language. I used the image before of tossing grass to see the wind – that won't show you the weather patterns, it will just show you one breeze in one place at one time. But it does preserve that one breeze in your mind so you can remember it. That's what I hope I've done.

From here I'll move on to a few points aside from orthography. In addition to the appearance of each phonemic grouping there are other indications of orality. There's pauses . . . and – regroupings, or rather I should say loopbacks. You'll have – I mean -- There are – false sentence starts. There is an abundance of dashes – sentences clipped -- sometimes to resume, sometimes to change topic or tone radically.

The narrators of my stories have biases. They might be racist or sexist or just simply hard to trust. They make mistakes – the names of the Wright brothers, for instance. To history, Wilbur and Orville. But not to the narrator of Blewmurz.

The tenses of the narration have a way of slipping briefly into the present, especially when the narrator forgets himself and sinks deeply into the memory he's recalling. I did find, however, that this was especially disruptive in text, of which we expect a certain linearity. I did reduce the numbers of tense slippages considerably from previous drafts with that in mind.

Further, you can see the oral tones to the texts by examining their character development. Most, if not all, of the Realist fiction, in an attempt to mimic a “real” world, kept their characters with both feet planted firmly on the ground. Abe Spalding in Fruits of the Earth can only become so great. Abraham's misguided catharsis in The Sacrifice leaves him incarcerated instead of liberated. Caleb Gare in Wild Geese can

hardly be seen even as the most tragic of “heroes.” The novels of this genre trace the lives of protagonists – never heroes.

In the texts of “Grashawpur Nuhpshulz” you find a grasshopper infestation, a man who survives the coldest night of winter despite being naked on a frozen slough. Death by dust. Improbable ways of boarding trains. The weed. The Ghost. The narrators mythologize. That, too, is part of orality – I didn’t read Ong until the draft you’ve got in front of you was underway. All of these elements entered because they seemed to fit, not because of Ong’s discussion of oral culture. I was quite startled to see how closely my stories seemed to fit into Ong’s description, quite frankly.

It is an attempt. That’s all. I wanted to make this prairie dialect a place on the page. If you can consider this in any way “oral” it is at best part of Ong’s secondary orality – it is an orality that possesses a consciousness of the written word, that uses the systems of chirography and typography. I’m still interested in the use of this approach – the application, if any. We usually think of a text as being “out there,” as being finished, as a concrete object. But this is more about the reaction to it than that notion suggests. As I said, it began as an experiment – and remains one.

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a note on orthography

At first glance, the texts that follow seem quite bizarre. One may even wonder what tenuous connection they have to the English language, since the letters seem to be strewn across the page haphazardly. I assure you this is not the case. The startling look of the words on the page is a result of an attempt to record the spoken word. Obviously any attempt to relocate an oral voice into a printed medium is bound to encounter difficulties in the transcription process. My intent was simply to make the words on the page more closely reflect the words in the air all around us. It is an attempt to capture a specific dialect found on the prairies, the voices of the elderly who have grown up on farms or in farming communities. I make no claim that my representation of dialect mimics everyone between the Rockies and Toronto. I merely maintain that it is one of many voices that can be heard on the Prairies. This is not an attempt at defining "the prairie voice." It is a look at one of the entries into prairie vernacular. It is, in general, the voice of someone elderly who can not claim a high level of formal education, and who has spent his or her best (and worst) years on the farm, or in farming communities. In general, the voice I have chosen to represent dictates a certain lack of schooling. In the era in which I have set my prose young boys often permanently left school to take on farming duties, so the voice is generally male, though it need not be. Girls also faced hardships that forced them from

school as well, but the problem was one experienced much more often by male children. I have reflected this in my voicing.

In many ways the voice I have constructed is quite similar to a voice that occurs periodically in many books of the Realist genre. Frederick Phillip Grove and Margaret Ostenso are examples of authors who have used this type of voicing, although W. O. Mitchell is perhaps the most notable example. His portrayal of the hired man's speech in Jake and the Kid is among the most extensive found in the Canadian Prairie prose of the era. The primary difference between the Realists use of the vernacular and my own is readily seen by a glance at the texts. For the authors listed above, and for many authors I have not mentioned (Rudy Wiebe and Robert Kroetsch are examples from the more modern era), the voices are used as brief mimetic interruptions in otherwise strongly diegetic texts. The considerable majority of texts use vernacular as caricature.

Poetry, given its greater tendency (and greater freedom) to play with language, has gone farther into mimesis and vernacular than has prose. The work of Andrew Suknaski and Dennis Cooley are certainly noteworthy in that regard. Works of prairie prose, however, have tended to stick to the roots developed by emergence of the British novel in both style and in its Victorian ideology. My attempt is designed to create distance from that historical model in two ways. The first is a refusal to limit storytelling to a moralistic lesson into "high" ideals, as often happened in the Realist Prairie novels. The second is to relate the story in what is ostensibly "pure" mimesis (although no degree of purity can ever truly be attained, since some diegetic shaping must exist in the creation of any text).

I began with the intention to create a voice that more accurately reflected my understanding of a prairie vernacular. That quickly developed into a monumental task. It became clear that the vernacular was not simply a matter of dropping the final “g”, using contractions, or producing elisions. In conversation we rarely pronounce the same letter the same way consistently. I observed this phonetic shifting of individual letters most acutely during the pronunciation of vowels. As an example, the letter “i” as it sounds in the word “bide” has only the barest relation, orally, to the “i” in the word “bid.” To indicate this in a written form I found it necessary to reflect the high vowel with “i” and the lower with an “ih” umlaut. The same is found with “u” and “uh” (as in “curd” and “cud,” respectively). A similar phonetic shift can be found again between “ay,” “a” and “aw” (as in “jay,” “can” and caw”). The oral existence of language changes at a pace linguistic topography can not keep pace with.

I had hoped to create a reference guide, a Prairie-English dictionary of sorts, but this task proved to be not only infeasible but thoroughly impossible given the properties of speech. Unlike the static entries of the written languages, spoken words tend to change depending on the words surrounding them. The written “it was” is always written the same way, regardless of context (if we disregard any incidental capitalization). However, when spoken, the same can be voiced as “iht wuhz” or, as often happens, elision occurs and we get the shortened “ihwuhz.”

Another consideration during elision is the transition of letters. “It also” when spoken and elided, generally becomes “ihdawlsō.” Such constant shifting and deletion of sound makes the vernacular exceedingly difficult, if not entirely impossible, to pin down authoritatively as it results in continual topographical change. While it may not be “user-

friendly” at the outset, there is a system of coding at work in my representation of a prairie vernacular. I offer the following list as an introductory step to understanding the system at work in the following stories:

thrEW	thrEW
rObe	rOb
rOb	rAWb
wAne	wAYn
wan	wAWn
cAn	cAn
wOrk	wUrk
sElf	sElf
In	IHn
tItle	tIdl
bEE	bEE
Oven	UHvihn
Was	wUHz
Up	UHp
hOUse	hOUse
crOWd	krOWd
bAre	bAIr
wheEL	wheeUHL
QUiet	KWiyet
EXCept	IHGSep
seX	seKS
MUSic	MYEWzihk

The column on the left is comprised of lexical English words, while the column on the right shows their rough equivalent in my version of vernacular. A portion of each word has been capitalized to indicate the most significant change. The list is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to be. It is, however, an indicator of shift between written English and spoken "Prairie" and can be used as a general reference guide during the stage of familiarization to my representation of a vernacular.

The texts require a reader to make a significant mental adjustment. I think, however, that the struggle to come to terms with this bastardized version of the English language is worthwhile. The sound of our language is as much a part of our culture and history as the look of our language. Yet due to the ethereality of the spoken word vernacular tends to disappear, and is allowed to do so (in part because the permanence of the lexical has endowed the written word with a false superiority). My representation of a Prairie vernacular is an attempt to insert a fraction of orality into a written tradition, and to preserve in the written record that which normally goes unwritten.

blewmurz

Wee muhstuh awl bihn buhtween twelv ur sihksteen, suhmwair ihn thair. Kors buh that ayj weed duhn mor wurk thenuh botloduh felluhz theez dayz. Eevihn farmurz theez dayz gawt nuthihn awn uhs. Hafuh mihlyihn dawlrz furuh muhsheen yuh yewz lesihnuh weekuh yeer. Jeezuhz. I ruhmembur kleeerihn stuhmps wihth nuhthihn buhduh teemuh horsihz tuh help. Hel, I ruhmembur kleeerihn stuhmps wihthout eevihn uh teemuh horsihz tuh help. I ruhmembur nawt beeyihn aybul tuhford gas fur wuht muhsheenz wee dihd hav. Dont spoz iht madurd muhch, tho. Wuhznt no krawp tuh wurkem awn enuhwayz. Thats wi wee endihd uhp mewvihn ihttuh thuh sihdee lik wee dihd. Thair juhs wuhzn no way tuh mayk enz meet no how, awn ruhleef ur awf.

Wee ayt kowhart sanwihchihz — mos kuhnuhks woodn dew that, buht muh dad, hee brawt uhs owvr wihth hihm aftur thuh ayteen wor, an I gess bak thair thay wur yewstewihm. Awful. Lik ruhbr — thats wi I dihdnt lik em. Wen yew get rit down tew iht, thuh tayst ihtself wuhzn so bad, iht wuhz thuh tekschur that turnd yur stuhmihk. Buht wee wuhz por — dihdn meen nuhthihn tho, kuhz ihf yur naybrz wur wairihn flowr saks tuh skewul, wel then, wuht dihd por meen? Buht I hadnt prawblee haduh ful dawlr ihn muh han uhntihl I wuhz sevihnteen — an Im not tawkin bout awl at wuhns. I meen kuhmbind. Uh nihkl heer, uh penee thair. Ihf I gawt soh muhch azuh penee bak then Id

skweez suh hard thuh kihngd dam neer ruhb awf awn muh pawm. An rihlee, wee wur bedur awf then suhmuh thuh foks uhrown uhs. At leest wee ayt wuhnsuh day, raygyuhfur. Onlee sihks ihn thuh famlee, an Ben did buhfor hee gawt tuh see thuh good timz wen thay finlee kaym bak. Did rit aftur that basturd bawdar hous – outrit bawdiht fur lesihn I payduh ruhnew muh drivurz lisihnts evree yeer now. Sihks ihnuh famlee sownz likuh lawt now, buht buhleev mee, thur wur suhm wiht uhlevihn ur twelv. Wuhn famlee awn ar street had tweneewuhn. Bangbangbangbang. Wuhn rit aftur uhnuhthr, most uhvm stihl lihvihn at hom. How thay gawt threw thihngz, Il nevur no. Wee — thats mee an muh bruhthr Dawnuhld — huhng out wihtuh kuhpuluh thuh kihdz that buhlawngd tuh that famlee. Thuh Dewbrawvskeez. Ar muhthr dihdn uhprewv — shee kd tell bi thur naym that thay wurnt ar kinduh peepul. Buht hay al stuhmihks ruhmbul ihn thuh saym langwihj, rit? So mee an Dawnuhld — Dawnee, bak ihn them dayz, huhng out wiht thuh tew Dewbee bruhthurz hew wihr klohsihst tew uhs ihn ayj. Awskr an Wihlbr. Thoz wur thur naymz, lik thuh giz hew flew thuh furs playn . . . thuh Rits? I thihnk so. Enuhwayz, Awskr, hee wuhzuh biht ohldr, sihksteen maybee, an then Wihlbr wuhz Dawneez ayj — forteen iht wooduh bihn. I wuhz twelv, I thihnk I sed that awlredeed, but thay let mee hang uhrown wihtuhm kuhz Dawnee sed iht wuhz awlrit. Hee wuhz awlwayz lookihn out fur mee, uh reeyul good bruhthr. Wee gawduhlawng good.

So enuhwayz, thuh Dewbeez, thay lihvd uhkraws thuh street fruhm uhs. Wuhzuh reeyul, reeyul bad aireeyuh uh town, yuhno, an buhsid them ihz thihs emtee lawt rit awn thuh kornr. We yewstuh play baysbawl thair suhmtimz. No gluhvz, uh buhstihd brewmhandl furuh bat an stonz fur thuh bawl. Jeezuz, thoz shur wur suhm dayz — wihsh I kd furgetem. I thihnk ar hol famlee lihvd awn ayt dawlrzuh muhnth. Thuh Dewbeez,

thay wihr thuh saym. Hel, eevuhn at fiv sensuh pursuhn pur meeyul, thayd last . . . wuht? uh week? An thats nawt eetihn three skwairz. Hel no. Thats onlee wuhnsuh day. Soh wee spent ar dayz skrownjih. Lawtsuh kihdz dihd. Yuhd pihk threw garbihj, look fur eeze skorz, pedee theft, yuhno, that kinduh thihng. An yuh dihd iht wihth yur muhm noihn yuh dihdiht. Ihwuhz awl rit az lawng az yew swipt suhmthihn that wuhz yewsful – kandulz, ur blankihts, er suhmthihn. Moslee I stol food, juhs lihdl bihts tuh eet, buhdId tayk wuhtevr I kd. Weed go ihn lik uhn armee, thuh foruh uhs. Wee haduh badlplan wurkt outn evreethihng. Eech tayk an iyul an wawk threw tuhkn lihdl thihngz uhndr ar kots, ur wuhn uhvuhs wood go ask thuh klurk tuh sho uhs wair thuh bulyuhn kyewbz wur ur suhmthihn, so thuh uhthurz kd go down thuh way, pihkihn uhp wuht thay kd. Wee wur good lihdl theevz. Prowd uhvit, tew. Hay, iht wuhz kinduh lik Rawbn Hood, rawbn fruhm thoz that had tuh feed ar famleez. Buht wuhn thihng wee nevur evur gawt ar hanz awn wuhz muhnee. Thur wuhznt no way tuh get enee. Thur wuhzn enee.

No wuhn had muhnee ihn suhch uhmownts that thayd gihv yuh enee, an rawbn banks wuhzuh biht beeyawnd uhs. Hel, woodntuh bihn muhnee at mohs banks enuhwayz. They wihr sadld wihth dets, tew — an rihch, fruhm kashihn ihn awn farmz wihthuh morgihj for dawlz buhhind. Rihch wihth land buht nawduh dawlurduh lend. An that wuhz thuh banks that bairlee had enee muhnee. Fur peepl — wel hel, thur wuhz nuhthihn fur eneewuhn. Wee lihvd ihn wuhnuhv thuh wurst naybrhoodz yew kd uhmajihn. Peepl awn ruhleef, nawdeevihn jawbz that wood pay yuh twenee sensuh day. An peepl wood dew enee duhmeenin jawb furuh kuhpul bihtsuh sihlvr. An men lik muh fawthr wood tayk iht. Wuhdels kd thay dew? Enuhthihn. Thay haduh dewiht. Hawlihn kohwul, ur is,

muhkihn out outhous holz — ya, hee dihd that. Fur fordee sensuh day. Yewd dew wuhtevr yew kd. Men, wihmihn, kihdz. Yew awl dihd enuhthihn.

Fur wihmihn ihwuhz wurs. Fur wihmihn thur wuhz awlwayz suhmthihn tuh sel. Lawtsuhvm fel ihtuh iht. Speshlee fur por wihmihn. An ar nayburhood wuhz bad, uh reeyul skihd ro kinduh plays. Suhmuh thuh wihmihn, thayd trayd thuhmselvz furuh gawdam sanwihch. Hel, man, yuh haduh eet. Laydur, ihn thuh wor, ihwuhz thuh saym way. French gurlzuh twelv, thurteen wood lin uhp furuh kuhpul dawlurz. Awful tuh thihnk uhv, now. Buht then, hay, thoz wur thuh timz. Wuht kd yuh dew? I dont thihnk enee wuhn uhvuhs kihdz evur had suh muhchuhz tew peneez tuh ruhb tuhgethur.

So wen I fown that kordr, wel, wee hardlee new wuht tuh dew.

Iv awlredee bihn bihzee telihn yuh how no wuhn had enee muhnee, nawdeevihn uh red sent, so I spoz yur wuhndrihn howuh lihdl puhnk lik me gawdihz gruhbee lihdl hanz awnuh hohl jenyewihn kuhnaydeeyun kordr? Wel, mee an Dawnee an Awskr an Wihlbr had bihn hihtn thuh tew klohsist groshree storz prihdee regyuhlur fur thuh pastew weeks, an thay wur startn tuh rekuhgniz ar faysihz an gihv uhs thuh reeyul hawki. Wee endihd uhp getn uhp urlee wuhn mornihn an wawkt uhbout fordee blawks, gawt ovur awn thuh sid uhthuh sihdee that seemd tuh bee dewihn uh biht bedr. Wee fihgurd maybee thuh storz ovur thair wood bee uh biht laksur awn thur suhkuruhdee, thay woodn no uhs, an so awn. Az iht wuhz, wee mayd out prihdee good. Wee hihduhm, ihf yuh wawnuh kawl iht that, juhs aftur noon, uhrown luhneh, fihgurihn suhmuhthuh staf wood haftuh bee awn thur brayks. Thay wur. Ihn suhm playsihz, bihg, bihg duhpartmihnt storz, thur wood bee tew, three peepl nawt stuhk buhind kownurz. Wee kleend uhp. Prawblee gawt tew, three dawlurz wurthuh stuhf ihn that wuhn day.

Buht that awl seemd lik trash aftur I gawt muh hanz awn that kordr. Ihwuhz awn thuh way bak, an wee wur krawsihn wairuh streetkar wuhz goihn bi. Thair wuhz thihs feluh hangihn awn tuh thuh bak, hihchihnuh rid thuh way uhs kihdz dihd. Thur wuhznt uhnuhf rewm tuh siht, buht yew kd get yur tohz awn, an ihf yuh huhng awn tuh thuh lamp ihn bak, then yuh sayvd yurself thuh fair fur az far az yew wur goihn — uhnlès thuh kar man saw yuh. An thihs wuhn sawihm. Hee gayvihz hanz uh reeyul good wak wihth thuh lihdl klubb hee kaireed awnihz belt, anuhkors thihs feluh gihvzuh hawl an falz awf ihtuh thuh street. Tookuh reeyul hard fawl, tew. Hihdihz hed awn thuh trak. Gawduh prihdee good wuhn, an wawkt uhway bleedn bad. Kors I kdnuh tohld yuh ihf hee wawkt uhway north, south, eest, ur ihfee flew uhway awnuh jewstuhp porkyewpin. Yuhsee, Id seen suhmthihn no wuhn els pihkt uhp awn. Wil thay wur awl wureeihn ovur thuh feluh hew took thuh tuhmbul, Id seenuh lihdl flash fawl ouduh hihz pawkiht. I wawcht iht aziht bownst, an iht hadn kwiht rolihn buhfor I wuhz awlredeë aftur iht, trafihk bee damd. Thair wuhz onlee wuhn kar ihn thuh street, an iht had pleneëuh tim tuh stawp, soh I ges I wuhzn ihn enee reeyul daynjur. Iht wuhz stihluh stewpihd thihng tuh juhs juhmp out lik that, buht iht kdnt bee helpt. Thuh kordr stardihd rohlihn uhway fruhm mee, an I ges suhm feluh saw mee chaysihn aftur iht, kuhz awluhvuh suhdn I see thihs gi uhkraws thuh street maykihnuh beelin foriht. Hee wuhz ohld — thurdee, fordee – thahwuhz ohld tew uhs bak then. Hee ran likuh mahnuh sihkstee— slolee, an lik wihth eech stepee took hee wuhz braykihnihz neekaps. Hee wuhz klohsur tew iht then mee tuh buhgihn wihth, an iht wuhz bownsihn tuhword hihm, so iht endihd uhp beeyihn uh prihdee klos rays. I snacht ihduhp wen hee wuhdnt mordihn tew steps awf fruhm iht. Lord, hee muhstuh bihn despriht. I fihgurd that wood end iht. I wuhn, rit?

Buht no, that wuhznt thuh way iht wuhz guhnuh go. Thihs feluh hawlz awf an pluhgz mee. Ritihn thuh chihn. Now I dihdn ihgspekt iht, dihdn see iht kuhmihn, an I went down likuh sakuh puhdayduhz downuh wel. Wul, that wuhznt guhnuh siht wel wihth muh bruhthr. I fel awn muh bak, an that man hee wuhz awn tawpuh mee lihkihdeespliht, priyihn at muh han. Laydr, aftur iht wuhz awl ovr, I chekt out muh han an thair wur lihdl see shayps ihn iht, bluhdee fruhm wair muh fihngurnayulz duhg ihn. Thats how muhch that kordr ment tuh mee. I juhs huhng awn tuh that koyn tho — Jeezuz. I kant buhleev Im sayihn wuhdIm sayihn. Awluhthihs ovur wuhn flihmzee koyn. Less muhnee then mi on kihdz yewstuh lin uhp awn thuh rayulrod traks tuh get skwihsht. I juhs huhng awn tuh that kordr az tit az kd bee, an no madr wair hee kihkt mee ur puhncht mee, I dihdn let go.

I new awl I had tuh dew wuhz hang awn tihl thuh kavulree uhrivd.

Dihdn tayk lawng. Dawnee wuhz pihst awf royuhl. Thats wuhn uh thoz thihngz that hapihnd bak then. Havihn tuh pul tuhgethur so tit, iht shur az hel maydyuh famlee. An so fur suhmwuhn tuh mess wihth yur lihdl bruhthr — wel, iht juhs wuhdnt kohshr. Dawnee hiht that feluh wihthuh takl rit ihn thuh chest, an I meen hee hihdihm *good*. That feluh may hav duhn bedur duh stand ihn fruhnuh thuh nekst streetkar then Dawnee. An then thuh Dewbeez wur awnihm, kihkihn an puhnchihn an lemee telyuh wee new howduh fit. Thoz dayz wur tuhfwuhnz, an wee wur ihn uh playsaz tuhfwuhnz az yew kn get, rit down bi thuh rayulyard, thair. Tuhfaz nayulz ihnuh horsheew. Weed al bihn ihn ar shair uh fits, an lehmeetelyuh, thuh ohnlee jenulmihn ihn fits thohz dayz wuhz Jeen Tuhnee. Gawd, now thair wuhzuh fidur — wuht hee dihd tuh Demsee, that wuhz art, lawng kownt ur nawt. Demsee, now hee wuhdnt ihgzaklee thuh kleenihst fidur manz evur seen,

buhdihn thuh rihng hee kdnt get uhway wihth kihkihn uh feluh ihn thuh krawch, an wee shur az hel dihdnt hav that lihmuhtayshuhn. Dihdn dew iht juhs wuhns, eethur. Ovuranovur. Anihn thuh rihbz, an wee puhnchtihm ihn thuh fays an bihdihm an ihf yew hav evur dreemd uhv suhmthihn that kd bee duhn tew uh man, wel then I bet wee dihd iht tuh that por feluh. I ruhmembur Wihlbr, hee puld thuh manz shewz awf, tuh steelem yuhno, an then wuhnts hee hadem awf yew kd see daylit threwem. Thay wur worn kleen threw. Beeduhp that bad. Had dim sizd houlz ihn thuh bawduhm. Wel I ges Wihlbr fihgurd thay wurnt wurth thuh taykihn, an hee hawld awfan hiht that feluh rit ihn thuh forhed wihth wuhnuhvem. Thur muhstuh bihnuh lews nayul in thuh heel ur suhmthihn, kuhzee buhstihm uhp reeyul bad — boy, hihm an thuh man hew fel awf thuh tram muhstuh mayd kwiduh fin pair down at thuh dawkturz. I awnihstlee thihnk wee wooduh kihld that man. Wel, I kant say I hihdihm that muhch kuhz I wuhz prihdee muhch duhn ihn, layihn bak tuh lihk muh wewndz. Uhbowl thuh ohnlee tim I dihd taykuh sihreeyuhs pohk adihm wuhz wen thuh Dewbee bruhthurz prawptihm uhp an Dawnee aygd mee awn. “Hihdihm, Norm! Hihdihm! Kihl thuh suhnuhvuhbihch!” I kn stihl heerihm shoutihn ovuranovur uhntihl I beltihihm wuhn. BuhdI don meen tuh mayk ihgskewsihz fur muhself. Ihf that feluh woodv did fruhmihz ihnjureez, an hee eezuhlee kd uhv ihf wee dihdn let uhp wehn wee dihd, I wooduh bihn juhs az gihltee az thuh uhthur three. Wee prawblee wooduh beedihm tuh deth tew, rit thair awn thuh street, ihf nawt fur thuh old laydee. Suhm slavihk bihch, shee starts yoduhlihn uhway ihn hur old langwihj, then suhm ihnglihsh, buht thuh mesihj wuhz thuh saym eethur way. “Dair keeleeng heem! Dair keeleeng heem! Halp! Kal dee polees! Kal dee polees! Dair keeleeng heem!”

Now bak ihn thoz dayz thur wuhz neerleeuh kawp awn evree kornr, so wee took awf at thuh fastihst speed wee had. Left thuh man layihn awn thuh rod. Kduhbihn kihld, tew. Dam luhkee hee wuhzn, I ges, ur thay prawblee wooduh lookt fur uhs hardur. Az iht wuhz, hew cairz? Ihwuhz juhst uhnuhthur beeduhp buhm. Hel, thuh kawps an thuh rayul bulz wur maykihn eenuhfuhv thohz themselvz, so wuht wuhz wuhn mor? Thay wooduh sentihm out tuh wuhnuh thuh ruhleef kamps, I spo. Wuhdevur. Shihpihm awf ouduh thuh sihdee. Get rihtuh thuh uhnduhzirihbul eluhmihnt. Huh.

An thay lef uhs thair. Uhs, boyz hew wooduh bewdihd that man intewihz grayv owvur wuhn bluhdee kordr. Uh penee. Wee wooduh duhn thuh saym thihng furuh penee, ihf thats wuhdihduhd ben. Dam rit. Stihl, hee shdntuh hiht mee, eethur. I wuhz onlee twelv.

Wee ran uhntihl wee gawt outuh breth, an ihn thoz dayz tha wuhzuh goodlee lawng ruhn. We kd go lik dawgz. Mee an Dawnee stardihd tawkihn uhbout wuht wee wur guhnuh dew wihth that muhnee, an how hapee ar muhthr wuhz guhnuh bee an then thuh Dewbeez pipd uhp an sed that muhnee wuhz thurz tew, anuh kors iht wuhz. I miduh fownd that muhnee, buhdI woodihnuh kep iht fur lawng wihthout thur help. That stuhmpduhs fur uhwiul. Ihf eethur wuhn uhvuhs kdv taykihnuh kordr hom, wel lemeetelyuh iht wooduh bihn kwit thuh deeul. Tew bihts kdv bawt thuh fihksihnz fur uh hol meeul, yew kd strech iht that far. Buht wen wee had tweneefiv sents tuh spliht buhtween tew famleez? Tha wuhz thurdee awd peepl. Fihgur that az les thenuh sent fur eech, an that kordr weed bled for dihdn seem lik muhch. Buht fur juhs thuh for uhvuhs? Wul tha wuhz dihfriht.

Wee sat down bi thuh rihvur, ihn thuh shayd, an stardihd tawkihn uhbout wuht wee wur guhnuh dew with that kordr. Splihtihn iht, that wen out thuh wihtduh prihtee kwihk. Iht woodnt goh az far that way. Sihks sents. Tha wood get yewuh pownduh flowur bak then — buht wi ihn thuh hel wood weeuh wawnihd that? Wee kdv taykn iht tuh thuh kandee kownur an had wuhn heluhvuh spree buht wee wur good lihdl theevz, so kandee wuhznt that bihguh deeul. Ihf wee wawnuhd suhm, no prawbluhm. Ihwuhz eezee uhnuhf tuh get suhm. Normuhlee wee wur so huhngree wee nevur eevuhn dreemduh getihn eneethihng mor then food. Buht weed juhs gawtn ouduh uh grohshree stor, an ar pawkihts wur fuluh lihdl awdzuhnenz that prihdee muhch fihld uhs uhp fur uhbiht. Buhsidz, iht seemd lik wee shd spend ar wihnfwal awn suhmthihn speshul.

Suhmthihn speshul. Wel, iht wuhz that. Huh. I duhno hew suhjesdihd iht. Awskr prawblee. Hee wuhz thuh ohldihst. I don kwit no howduh telyuh thihs wihtthoud iht sowndihn juhs awful. I don spoz thurz rihlee enee way tuh ihgsplayn thihngz an kuhm awf smelihn likuh roz, tho, so Il juhs tel yuh fladout — wee duhsidihd wee wuhz guhnuh geduh prawstuhtewt. I no wuht yur thihnkihn, for uhvuhs an onleeuh kordr, buht lik I say, muhnee wentuh heluhvuh lawt furthur then. I ges yew kn see that ihf for uhvuhs boyz wur ruhmuhjihh threw thuh trash tuh help keep ar famleez goihn, wel yew kn bet that thur wur gurlz ihn thuh saym puhzihshuhn. Gurlz, wihmihn, hel, eevihn granmuhthrz wur ihtewiht. Pedlihn thur asihz. An yuhno, I nevur hurd uhvuh sihngl sawluhtairee wuhn getn uhrestihd. Mayksyuh thihnk, doniht? Ihf yew wuruh man an yew wur standihn awn thuh street kornr hatihn han, wam, tha wuhziht — thurdee dayz ihn thuh klihnk, then awf tew uh ruhleef kamp. Buhdihf yew stood awn that saym kornr taykihn muhnee ihnuh dres, wel I dont thihnk I evur sawuh sihngl gurl get put uhway. I meen yew kd bee

hawlihn iht ihn lik mihnoz ihn thuh mornihn. Uhkors, thuh hol bihznihs wuhz duhn dihfrihtlee then. Thuh gurlz dihdn stand uhrown rit uhndur thuh kawps nozihs, uhnlés thay wur thuh reeyul downanoudurz, thuh kind that dihd thur bihznihs ihn thuh aleez, an yew rihlee dihdnt wawnt thoz. Mos gurlz juhs set thuhmselvz uhp suhmwairz an let wurd spred. Spent thur hol dayz ihn uh lihdl rewm, wuhnuthoz wair yew kn see thuh toyliht fruhm thuh bed an thuh hawt playt fruhm thuh bathtuhb. No wawlz, an thuh hol plays thuh siz uhvuh normul pursihnz bedrewm. Yur prawblee thihnkihn that no wuhn rihlee kaym fur thuh duhkohr enuhwayz, an lemeetelyuh, yur dam tewtihn thay dihdnt.

Awskr, hee sedee new uh thihs gurl hewd get reeyul frenlee wiht uhs. An that sowndihd fin buht wee wuhz awl wureed – wuht woodiht kawst? Wuhzuh kordr guhnuh dewiht? An Awskr hee telz uhs tuh taykiht eezee, sheez hapee duh dewiht fur wuhdevur wee gawt. I no how that sownz, I no, buht shee wuhz dewihn iht fur muhnee at leest. Suhm gurlz wur dewihn iht fur tewdayold bred, wiht at that tim yew kd bi fur tew peneez. Kors yewd ohnlee buy iht aftur yewd shawpt uhrown tuh see ihf yew kdn gedihd suhmwair fur wuhn, an suhmtimz yuhw kd.

Thuh gurl wuhz uhway bak ihn ar end uhv town, not moren sihks blawks fruhm ar homz. Thihsihz wuht wee wawnt – klos uhnuftuh get kawt bi ar muthrz, ihf thay wur out dewihn thur shawpihn — kors thuh chansihzuh that wur prihdee slihm. Nawt lik thay dihduh lawduh goihn out tuh blo suhm do juhs fur thuh heluhviht. Madur uh fakt, thuh Dewbeez, thair muhm wok uhp eech an evree mornihn at sevihn an wawkt down tuh thuh yewkraynyuhn orthuhdawks church down awn Hihgihnz, dihdn kuhm bak tihl shee hadtuh get bak tuh thur shak tuh mayk wuht dihn shee kd furur huhzbuhn an kihdz.

Shee lihvd ihnuh plays uhp awn thuh fihfth floruh thihs tenuhmihnt bihldihn. Stairz so nairo yur sholdrz bruhsht thuh wawlz az yuh wawkt uhp, an I swairduhgawd that evree flit yuh wawkt uhp iht gawt ten duhgreez hawdur then thuh las flit. An Im tawkihn selseeuhs. Ihwuhzuh fuhkn furnihs ihn thair. Uhbout hafway uhp wee haduh stawp an wayt awnthuh landihn tuh leduh feluh pas awnihz way down. Wuhzn uhnuhf rewm tuh go buhsid ihm awn thuh stairz. Hee had theez awful yeluh teeth anee flasht uhs thihs reeyul bihg smil that mayd mee feeyul giltee, lik hee new wuht wee wur awn thuh way uhpstairz for. Wuhz kinduh lik getn kawt withuh durdee pihkshur bi yur muhtthr. Wenee past by wee awl waydihd uhntihl wee herdihm go out awntuh thuh street outsid, juhs standihn awn thuh landihn ihn awl that heet. Aftur wee stawpt ihwuhz awful hard tuh get goihn uhgen. Wee wawnihd tuh get uhp thair an see thihs gurl Awskr sedee new, buht krist wur we nervuhs. I bet wee wooduh bihn swetihn juhst az muhch eevihn ihfiht wuhs wihnr an thuh heet wuhz awf. Awskr seemd almos redee tuh gihv uhp an fawlow thuh feluh out, buhd aftur uhmihiht hee wenuhp thuh last kuhpuluh flits wihth uhs rit buhind ihm. Gawd, ihwuhz hawduhp ihn thair.

An then hur lihdl plays — hur naym wuhz Gloreeyuh. Hadan afgan awnur bed she muhstuh bawt sekinhan at thuh saleean. Haduh bihg kraws awniht, ihn brown. Thuh rest wuhz thihs payul, payul yeluh lik thuh kuhlur uh thuh buhdur yuh get nowuhdayz. Shee haduh krewsuhfihks awn thuh wawl, tew, anuh bibul awn thuh nitstand. Muhstuh bihnuh reeyul holee rolur buhfor thuh timz brawdur lo. Shee dihdn hav no wuhn thair wihthur. Wooduh bihn reeyul eeze, wuhns yuh new wair shee wuhz, tuh go uph thair an tayk uhdvanihj — wuhznt eevihnuh chayn awn thuh door.

Sihnts hee wuhz thuh oldihst, Awskr yewzhuhlee took thuh leed ihf no wuhn rayzd tew muhchuhvuh fuhs, so hee wuhz ihn thuh leed then. Hee wuhz thuh wuhn hew nawkt awnur dor. Shee dihdn ansur riduhway — wee kd heerur ihn thair an shee hawlurd that shee wuhz kuhmihn, so wee waydihd. Now how dew I tel yew wuht wee wur thihnkihn wen shee kep uhs thair waytn? I spoz yew thihnk I miduh bihnuh lihdl yuhng fur thuh holthihng, ay? Wel, trewth iz, I wuhz. Lik I sed, shee wuhznt mi ideeyuh — Awskr suhgjestihd iht. Seemz lik thuh kinduh thihng heed dew. Mee an Wihlbr prawblee had no rit tuh bee thair adawl, yuhng az wee wuhz. Both ar bruithurz thawdiht wuhz thuh best ideeyuh sihnts hewevr thuh hel ihnvenihd thuh slihnshawt duhsidihd hee shd ihnvent thuh slihnshawt. I wooduh juhs az sewn bawt suhm fresh bred, suhm partsuhthuh anuhmul that wur akchuhlee duhlih briht kuhts bi thuh buchur ihnsteduh thuh kastawfs. Fur gawdzsayk, wee kduh awl ayt tuh burstihn awnuh kordr. Buht no, thay wawnihd tuh go out an get thihs wumihn. I fihgurd I shduh bihn aybul tuh telihm wuht wee wur guhnuh dew wihtiht — I meen I dihd find iht aftur awl. BuhdI new thuh duhsihzhunuhd bihn mayd. Enee pipihn uhp I dihd juhs wooduh gawt mee kuhtout fruhm thuh hol shuhbang — an I wuhzn so yuhng that I had no ihntrihst ihnur adawl — buht mi stuhmihk juhs haduh strawngr voys then mi crawch bak then. Buhdihf yur tew yuhng for iht, seks seemz lik ihts suhm grayt bihg seekriht — nawt so muhch az now uhkors, kuhz most uhvuhslihvd ihn wuhn rewm playsihz at wuhn poynt ur uhnuhther, maybee eevihn spent nits awl ihn wuhn bed, so wen ar pairihnts so muhch az shook hanz wee new uhboudiht. Iht juhs seemd lik suhchuh hyewj thihng — wurth thuh hol kordr eevihn. Uhkors I dam neer panihkt, I wuhz so scaird. Fihgurd ar muhthr wuhz guhnuh step out fruhm buhind thuh dor an gihmee an Dawnee that lookuh hurz an grab uhs bi thuh eerz

an leed uhs hom, telihn uhs that dihdn wee no bi now that shee wuhz lik Gawd, shee new evree las thihng wee wur uhp tew buhfor wee wihr uhp tew iht so wi dihdn wee juhs start buhhayvihh rit thihs ihnstihnt buhfor thuh hol naybrhood found out uhhout wuht kinduh boyz wee wur, soshuhlizihh wihth thihs tipuh fihlth rit ihh thuh mihduluh thuh day . . . I wuhz nurvihs, swehtihh an maykihnh uhp thuh storee ihh muh mind — I fihgurd ihf I needihd tew Id telur thadI fown thuh kordr an wawnihd tuh brihng iht hom tuh feed ar famlee, buht then thuh Dewbeez wawnihd suhmuhviht tew an so wee kdnt juhs brihng iht hom an eevihh then I juhs wawnihd tuh bi suhm sanwihchihz so then maybee thur stihl wooduh bihn suhm leftovurz tuh brihng hom, buht thay ihhsihstihd wee kuhm heer an so mee an Dawnee had no choys, an wee dihdnt eevihh wawnuh bee thair, rit Dawnee?

An then shee opihnd thuh dor. Nawdar muhthur, uhkors — thuh hewur. Hookur, yuhd kawlor now, I ges. Her naym wuhz Gloreeyuh — dihd I tel yuh that? Muhstuh — I ruhmembur telihn yew uhhout that kraws afgan uh hurz. Iht juhs seemd lik suhchuh thihng fur uh hewur duh hav, az ihf evree tim shee turnd iht down shee wuhz ruhmindihd how wihkihd shee wuhz wen shee hadtuh push thuh kraws uhway fur wuht shee wuhz uhhout tuh dew. Iht wuhz eeze tuh thihnk uh hur az needihh that kinduh penuhnts. Wel, eeze now. Back then thats nawdihgzaklee wuht wuhz awn mi mind.

Ihwuhzuh biht mor thenuh deokayd uhntihl thuh sekihnd wor kaym uhlawng. I wuhz kawld tuh survihs wehn I wuhz tweneesihks, an ovurseez wee awl went tuh seeihm. Ihwuhz ihgspektihd, rihlee. I ruhmembur evree tim I wuhz suhprizd that thay dihdn hav that saym yeluh an brown afgan — lik iht shduh bihn standurd ihshew, lik ar bewts ur rifulz. I doudihf Id evur fownduh gurl hew had wuhn that I evur wooduh lefdur — at leest uhntihl thuh wor wuhz ovr. Iht juhs wooduh seemd lik hom suhmhow — weerd how

yuhh thihnk uh thihngz lik that az beeihn hom. Hel, enuhthihn wooduh seemd likuh nis spawt tuh wayt fur thihngz tuh stawp, juhs tuh hid thair sayf fruhm thuh bulihts an thuh muhd.

Enuhwayz, Gloreeyuh, shee opihnz thuh dor an sheez gawt dark hair thats kinduh strihngee fruhm swet an dark iz wihth theez gawdawful gray bagz buhneethuhm. Shee wuhz yuhng — maybee for yeerz oldurihn Awskr, buht shee seemd uhlawt oldur then that. Wee awl dihd, yuhno. Maybee iht wuhz dihfurnt ihn thuh uhpskayul nayburhoodz, maybee they awl mewvd normul, buht down ihn ar strechuh town evreewuhn wawkt lik thayd juhs kraktuh rihb. Wuhndur wuht kawzd iht — kd bee that evreewuhn juhs wurkt so dam hard thay awl had bad baks an muhsl ayks. Maybee that wawk – ihwuhz lik wen yuh see peepul shuhflihn down thuh hawlz ihn an old foks hom – maybee ihwuhz juhstuh vihzuhbul sin uhv thuh lihkihn weed awl took thoz yeerz. Yuhno ihts krayzee buhdihn suhm wayz iht seemz lik I wuhz oldur then then I am now.

So wuhdI wuhz getihn at ihs that shee wuhznt so uhtraktihv that enee man wood juhs go ouduhv ihz hed forur, buht shee wuhz yuhng, skihnee, an feemayl. Thats awl yuh needihd — mor then yuh needihd, rihlee. Shee opihnd thuh door juhstuh krak, nawt eevihn az wid azuh chayn wooduh let iht go ihf sheeduh had wuhn awn iht. Seemz duhmurihnhel theez dayz tuh nawt hav wuhn, buht lemeetelyuh, door chaynz wur prihdee rair bak then. Shee opihnd thuh dor juhs that biht, then stuhkur fays ihn thuh gap. Hur fays lookt reeyul suhspihshus. I ges wuhns shee saw wee wuhz juhs kihdz shee thawdiht muhstuh bihn nuhthihn kuhz shee ruhlakst uhlawt, eevihn smiyuld at Awskr uh biht. “Ya? Wuhduhyuhwaent?” shee ast, an I kd tel shee wuhz reeyul yewstuh enurtaynihn men juhs bi how kazhewul shee wuhz wihth hihm fur meetihn thuh furst tim.

Awskr, tho, awluhvuhshuidhn hee seems reeyul uhnshuruhv ihmself, nurvihs uhvihz wurdz, kuhzee tayksuh bihduh tim buhfor hee starts tawkihn. Finlee, hee hihts awnihz shurfiur pihkuhp lin. "Weev gawduh kordr."

"Ya. So?" I kinduh lafuh biht now, kuhz shee wuhz playihnuh biht tuh wiht uhs. Ihf wee dihdn hav uhnuhf balz tuh say wuht wee wuhz lookihn for, wee dihdnt hav uhnuhf balz tuh bawthr kuhmihnihn. Buht Awskr shoots bak "So?" hihz self an then kinduh drawpshihz hed bakuh biht, poyntihn uhs uhthrz out wiht thuh tawpuh hihz hed, az ihf shee dihdnt awlrede see uhs awl wejd ihtuh thuh lihtul landihn at thuh tawp uhvthuh stairz, lik pihgzihnuhshewt.

"Wihch wuhn?" Shee kumz bak adihm, an rit uhway I ges awl ar eerz purkt uhp. Wee new sheeduh eethur senuhs pakihn ridawf ur tayk uhs awn. Hur telihn uhs that sheed tayk wuhn uhvuhs wuhzuh good sin, an wee fihgurd sheed dew wuht shee needihd tew tuh geduh bihg, fat kordr — eevihn that yuhng wee kd seeuh biyurz markiht wen iht wuhz stairihn uhs ihn thuh fays.

Awskr looks bak ovurihz sholdur, mor at mee an Dawnee kuhz Wihlbr wuhz uhp adihz uhthur arm, an then looks bak adur. I don think shee kduh seenee wihnkt aduhs. "Awl," hee sez, kewul az thuh jeluhtihn ar muhm mayd fur suhpur that nit. "Awl? Fur uh kordr?"

"Yew gawdiht," hee sez, an mee an Dawnee an Wihlbr ar awl ihn aw kuhzuh how heez tawkihn tewur, az ihf hee prawpuhzihshuhnz prawstuhtewts evree dayuh thuh week an twis awn thursdayz.

"Nawt fur uh kordr," shee sez. Sheez tiurd uh haglihn ovur pris. Shee muhstuh felt lik halihbuht atuh street stand — evreewuhn ihnshisthin thur juhstuhfid ihn payihn

buhlo fair markiht pris kuhz ihts gawt suhm deefekt yuh kaneevihn see, an buhsidz markiht pris ihz juhs tew steep enuhwayz.

“Ihts awl weev gawt,” suhmwuhn sez, ihgsep thihs tim ihts nawt Awskr ihts Dawnee an so hee muhst wawniht rihlee bad tew.

“Ya. Ihts awl wee gawt.” Thihs tim ihts Awskr. “Buhsidz, ihts muhnee, at lees yur nawt dewihn iht fur week old hamburgur.”

Shee seemd tuh pawz, an I thawt I kd see suhmthihn awl ovurur fays. I juhs kdn tel wuhdiht wuhz. I thawt maybe Awskr had pusht tew far an shee wuhz goihn tuh turn uhs uhway, an thats iht, wee skrewduhp, bihg. Shee wawks uhway fruhm thuh dor buht leevziht opihnuh biht. “Gihmee uh mihniht” shee sez, an wee awl hurd thuh kreek az shee sat down awn thuh bed. Wee dihdn no ihf shee wuhz guhnuh tel uhs tuh kuhm ihnur nawt, so aftur wuht seemd likuh lawng tim tewuhs wee awl wenihn.

Shee wuhz layihn awn thuh bed wihthur hanz ihnur fays, bairchestihd an wairihn theez gawzee wit laygd uhndurwair lik Id nevr seen ihn ar muhmz lawndree baskiht at hom. Thay almos lookt mor likuh manz skihveez. Thay wur so thihn thay wur moslee seethrew. I dont thihnk thay wur spostuh bee that way, I thihnk thay wur juhst uhbout worn out fruhm wair, buht that dihdn madr muhch. Shee maydihm wurk tewur advanihj. Hur peepul wur fruhm thuh saym parduh thuh wurld az Awskrz so shee seemduh biht likihm ihnur kuhluhrihn, skihn wit az aygshelz an hair dark az aksl grees. Yew kd see iht threwur uhndurwair, kuhz shee dihdn shayv thuh way thuh gurlz ihn Frans dihd. Hur nihpulz wur rewjd — dihd I menchuhn that yet? Yew kd see ihm uhndurneeth thuh red, pihnk az Lewsihfurz tuhng. Shee had redihnur cheeks, tew, so iht lookt lik she wuhz blushihn, buht that muhstuh bihn maykuhp tew. Now Id seen uhnuhfuh muh sihurstur an

muh muhthur tuh no uhbout wihmihnz parts, so nuhnuh that kaym azuh shawk — ihgsept that uhndurwair, rihlee. Iht seemd awd. Almos likuh pairuh muh fawthurz bawksur shorts, tho reeyul nis lookihn awn hur.

Wee awl stood thair — reel stihf — at thuh rayul uhvur bed, Wihlbr, Awskr, Dawnee, an mee, lik mornurz lind uhp buhsid an opihn kawfihn. “Okay, boyz. Hewz furst?” shee ast. Gloreeyuh that ihz. I swair shur as Im tawkihnuh yew shee wuhz lookihn straydat mee, buhdIm shur enee uhv thuh uhthurz wooduh sed thuh saym. Shee had reeyul sweet iz, nawt dedihnd thuh way uhlawduh thuh gurlz ihn thuh wor wur — yew kd seeur ihnur iz, see wuht kinduh persuhnalihdee shee had.

I thihnk wee wur tew yuhng tuh bee mesihn wihthuh wumihn lik that. Wee haduh heluhvuh tim juhs ansurihn hur kweschuhn — an nawt thuh way yewd thihnk, eethur. I bet yew fihgur uhs pakuh lihdl kihdz wihth uhrekshuhn az hard azur bedposts wooduh bihn lik liuhnz ovur uh laym zeebruh, buht that wuhzihn thuh way iht wuhz adawl, nawt biuh lawng shawt. Hel no. Wee wur awl ihn awn thuh ideeyuh now, buht taykihn thuh leed awn thihs, wel that seemd kwiduh leep. I awl buht bakt uhp uhgihnst thuh dor wen shee ast, an tookuh look at thuh uhthur boyz. Dawnee, hee wuhz stairihn adur chest likee kdnt ruhmembur howduh blihnk an wipihn thuh kornr uhvihz mouth wihth thuh bakuhvihz hand reeyul awfihn, thuh way hee dihd wen hee gawt nurvuhs. Wihlbr ovur awn thuh far sid uh thuh lin, I kd see hee wuhzn eevihn lookihn adur — hihz iz wur fihkst awn thuh flor awn thuh uhthur siduh hur bed. An az fur Awskr, hee wuhz lookihnur ded ihn thuh iz — buhfor hee turnd tuh Dawnee, enuhwayz. “Go uhed, Dawnee,” ee sez. “Yew guyz kn go furst. Mee an Wihlbruhl go last.”

Gloreeyuh, shee wuhz juhs layihn thair, lookihn aduhs. Shee lookt lik shee wawnihd tuh crawl ihtewuh hol suhmwair ihnsteduh beeihn thair. Don uhmajihn ihwuhz ihgzaklee hur prowdiht momihnt, awl thihngz kuhnsihdurd.

Now that wuhz reeyul awd, lemee tel yuh. Awskr nevr vawluhnteed suhmwuhn els uhnles hee thawt wee wur guhnuh get kawt at wuhdevur iht wuhz wee wur uhp tew. Heewuhz juhstuh biht oldr an wee awl thawt heed bee bedr uhkwihpt tuh deeul wihth thuh uhnnoihn. Dawnee muhstuh bihn kowntihn awn Awskr taykihn ovur tew, kuhz hee shur felt thuh saym way I dihd. Wee wur skwermihn at thuh thawduhviht.

“No, no, Awskr,” hee sez, “yew go uhhed. Yur thuh oldihst.” Then, so iht dont seem lik heez chihkihn, hee gihvs uhs thihs gewfee grihn an sez “Yew bihn waytihn thuh lawngihst.”

“Ya, ya, buhdI fihgurI kn wayduh biht lawngur.” Awskr sez. “Buhsidz, ihwuhz yur bruhthur that fownd thuh kordr.”

Ihwuhz startihn tuh look likuh gaymuh chineez checkurz wair both sidz onlee juhmp thur on marbulz. “Wuhduhboudiht, lihdI man?” Awskr asks ihn that way hee haduh maykihn ihmself seem oldur thenee wuhz. “Yew wawnuh brayk thihs fihlee for uhs?” Sumtimz wee snuhk ihtuh thuh mewveez – hee muhstuh stol thuh lin fruhm wuhnuh thuh westurnz.

Jeezuz, muh throt wuhz so drid uhp I kd hardlee speak. “No.” Ihwuhz thuh furnihst Id evur ruhfewzd enuhthihn tuh enee uhvihm. I wuhz awlwayz uhwair uh how muhch yuhngur I wuhz, an thadiht woodn tayk muhch tuh get muhself kihkt ouduh ar lihdI grewpuh downanoudurz. Thuh las thihng I wawnihd wuhz tuh hav tuh spend muh dayz at hom playihn dawlz wihth muh sihstr, so yewzhuhlee I dihd wuhdevur thay tol

mee tew. Buht nawt thihs tim. “Yew go. Yew go furst, ur Il juhs tayk thuh kordr hom.” I spok prihdee tuhf, buhdI dihdn no how thuh chalihnj wood stand. Mee klaymihn sol onurshihp uh that lihdl koyn wuhz guhnuh rawb them uh twelv anuh haf sents, an I fihgurd thay mit nawt tayk tew kindlee tewiht. Now mee an Dawnee wur no slouchihz wen iht kuhm tuh fitihn, buht weed nevr fawduhgihnst thuh Dewbeez buhfor, an tuh telthuh trewth I dout wee wooduh bihnuh mach forem.

So thawuhz iht. Id forstuh standawf. I fihgurd Awskr wooduh gihvihn uhs kwiduh spankihn an senuhs awn ar way, saym way I fihgurd Gloreeyuh wooduh. Wen Awskr drew ihn that bihg breth uh air I fihgurd ihwuhz awn — fihgurd that breth wuhz tuh pluhk uhp thuh kurihj, that wee wuhr guhnuh dewkiht out rit thair an then at Gloreeyuhz feet.

Septuh kors thats nawt wuht endihd uhp hapnihn. I gawt no dout ihf weed rihlee mihkstiht uhp Dawnee an I wooduh bihn sent hom wihth thuh short enduh thuh stihk, so I rihlee hadnt wawnihd tuh fit. Buhsidz, iht haduh bee lik thurdeeayt ur fordee duhgreez ihn thair, wihth hur wuhn lihdl uhlektrihk fan nawt strawng uhnuhf tuh eevihn push thuh air uhrown. Ihwuhz tew hawt tuh fit ihn thair — tew hawt tuh fuhk tew, buht wee fihgurd iht dihdn madr. So Awskr drawz uhp thihs bihg breth an muh hanz kurld uhp, redee duh fit az durdee az I kd sihns I wuhz sew muhch smawlur then eethur Awskr or Wihlbr, an then hee juhs ekshald reeyul shakuhlee anihz sholdurz sluhmpt forwurd lik suhmwuhn pulduh pluhg an awl thuh lifuhd gurguhld ouduh hihm an ruhn awl ovur thuh flor.

Thuh onlee uhthur tim I sawuh pawschur lik that wuhzihn eevihn awnuh hewmuhn. Yeeرز laydr, wen weed juhs gawtn seduld ihntew ar furst hous ihn Brandihn — thawuhz ihn thuh hous that wuz so klos tuh thuh traks that wenuh trayn kaym by at nit

wee haduh get ouduh bed tuh hold thuh dihshihz ihn thuh kuhburdz. Enuhwayz, thuh naybr feluh haduh kuhpuluh reeyul bihg dawgz that muhstuh had uhbout tew pursent uh evree breed yew kn thihnk uhv ihn thur bluhd, an enuhwayz this gi wuhzuh meen suhnuhvuhbihch, anuh bewzur duh bewt, an awn thuh nits wen heed had mor then hee yewzhuhlee had heed kuhm out an wihp them dawgz wihthuh meduhl kot hangur. Heed straytihn iht out an kuhm out wihth iht ihn wuhn han anuh bawduhl ihn thuh uhthur. Kep em rit ihn thur ruhn an juhs wayuld thuh evurlihvihn hid rit awfem. Hihz dawgz mewvd lik Awskr dihd, wen thay saw that kot hangur. Thay drawpt thur hedz reeyul low, an thur sholdurz, juhs kinduh krihnjd eevihn buhfor thay wur getihn hiht. Thats how Awskr mewvd – weerd fur uh kihd tuh bee that way wen heez about tuh ged ihmself layd, buhdiht wuhzuh heluhvuh thing, that gurl an hihm.

Hee wawkt uhrown tuh thuh siduhvur bed an shee staird adihm rit ihn thuh fays az hee kaym. Now I fown out jurihn thuh wor that normuhleeuh wumihn lik thaduhl bee pruhpairihn urself, wawshihn uhp ur getihn pruhtekshun ur wuhdevur, buht thihs gurl shee juhs lay thair an wacht ihm kuhm. Hee uhnbuhtihnd ihz shurt, puldiht awf, then letihz belt lews an pusht ihz pants an uhndurwair awf. Hee kepihz sawks awn. Wee awl dihd — duhno wi — wuhzn lik thay kep uhs fruhm beeihn naykihd ur eneethihn. Ar sawks prawblee had mor thredz mihsihn at thuh heeulz then wur stihl thair, sawks wair yur bihg to wuhz ihn thuh opihn air. Hee sat awn thuh ejuhv thuh bed an tuhcht ur — nawt eneewair yuh kdn tel yur chihldrihn uhbout, juhs pudihz han awnur stuhmihk, left iht thair furuh sekihn, then klimbd uhp.

Ihwuz toduhlee kwiyiht ihn that swedee lihdl rewm — nuhn uhvuhs wur speekihn. Wuhz az kwiyiht az muhmuhz fruhnt parlur – ihgsept fur wen wee had

kuhmpnee no wuhn evur wen ihn thair, sept wen muhmuh duhstihd. Kwiyiht az deth ihn thair — no. No, iht wuhdnt eether.

Jeezuhz, that lihdl klawk.

Gawd, Id furgawtihn awl uhboudiht. Thuh gurl, shee had thihs lihdl klawk awnur bedsid taybul, juhs buhhind thuh bibuhl — so smawl yew kd hardlee see iht buhind thuh good book — wuhzuh lihdl wit bawks wihtuh blak fays, wit nuhmburz, wit hanz, thihs lihdl bawks, an iht tihkt likuh thuhndurklap. Mayd yuh so kawnsuhs uh tim yuh kdn help buht huree so yew kd gedouduh thair an kwiht waystihn yur lif — how Gloreeyuh kduh stood iht, layihn thair nekst tuh that lihdl klawk kowntihn down awl thoz dayz. Thuh tim tihkihn bi, untihl thuh nekst feluh shod uhp, tihkihn bi tihlee left, tikhin bi tihl thuh nekst wuhn kuhm. Wooduh drov mee nuhts. So iht wuhz kwiyiht, nawt ded kwiyiht, buht nuhthihn wuhz maykihn noyz ihgsep fur that lihdl klawk. Yew kd heer thuh fan goihn, buht ihwuhz lik thuh air ihn thair wuhz tew hevee duh mewv. No wuhn had sed enuhthihn ihn kwiduh few mihnihts uhntihl Awskr gets over awn tawpuh hur an putsihz nee ritihnur thi. Hee duhzit so iht hurts an sheez gawduh mewvur laygz uhpert tuh maykiht stawp, an shee sez, loud. “No, Awskr. No. *No*.” Reeyuhl sihreeuhs, speshlee thuh last wurd. Muh hart fel kuhz now thadiht seemd lik we wur awl guhnuh geduh lihdl rol ihn thuh hay I wuhz lookihn forwurd tewiht. I kdn wayt tuh tel iht tuh thuh uhthur kihdz muh ayj — kuhz nuhnuhvihn had evur duhn enuhthihn eevihn klos tuh thihs buhfor. Fihgurd iht beet Ralf Matvuhchuks storee uhbout thuh tim hee sawihz bruhthurz gurlfren wihtur hed ihnihz lap bi uh lawng shawt.

Wen shee stardiht sayihn no I thawt furuh sekihn thihs gurl had awluhvuh suhdihn lookt at wuht shee wuhz dewihn, skrewihn kihdz fur kordrz, then lookt uhgin at

thuh bibl an thuh afgan awnur bed wihth that bihg brown kraws. Ihwuhz stihl thair, sihns thay hadn pushtiht down. I fihgurd weed maydur see thuh liduh Gawd. Wee mit nawduh bihn thuh bestuh kihdz, buht mostuh thuh stuhf wee dihd wee dihd tuh surviv, buht awlihnawl wee wur awl prihdee ruhlihjihs. Ihf sheeduh drawpt awnur neez an buhguhn prayihn rit thair I wooduh ihnsihstihd that wee awl go. An I wooduh mayd shur tuh leev that kordr awnur bed wihthout thuh uhthurz seeihn mee dew iht. Hel, I miduh gawt down awn mi neez wihthur.

An then Awskrzs voys kaym out, lo lik thuh man hee awlmos wuhz an ful uh thihs angur that maydihz pairihnts aksent kuhm out. “Dyuh wawn thuh kordr ur nawt?” Hee shouts adur, hihz fays klos uhp awn hurz. Iht seemd so lowd, uhp thair ihn that lihdl spays. Shee wuhz starduhld, went rihgihd furuh sekihnd. Then shee opihnd ur mouth tuh say suhmthihn buht kwiht.

“Awskr!” Wihlbr sed ihmself, an Awskr glaird bak. “Yew shuhduhp, Wihlbr. Yew shuht uhp rit now ur juhs go awn hom rit gawdam now!”

“BuhdAwskr! Yew kant —”

“Go awn!” Awskr shoufihd, kihkin atihz lihfl bruhthur wairee stood. “Get thuh fuhk ouduh heer! Yew gefawn hom! Il bee thair ihnuh wiul— an ihf yew sayuh thihng tuh muhmuh then Il — yew gedawn hom! Go thuh fuhk hom! Rit now!” Wihlbr wuhz kriihn. I kdn fihgur wuhd uhbout — I dihdn see wuhwuhz so bad uhbout iht. I meen I dihdn feeul kuhmfturbul wihth thihs gurl havihn tuh lihv lik that, buhdI meen iht wuhzn lik ihwuhz muh sihstur ur eneethihn so I dihdn fihgur ihwuhz wurth kriihn ovur. Id nevur seen Wihlbr go awl week lik that — yewzhuhlee they awl laft at mee, I wuz thuh baybee uh thuh grewp. I kdn buhleev iht – heed heer uhboudiht laydur, thawuhz fur shur. Hee

turnt uhrown an wawkt ouduh that rewm likee wuhz wawkihn ouduh church — I nevur wooduh had thuh kurihj tuh sho I wuhz that skairduh uh gurl an wuht wuhz buhneeth thoz blewmurz uh hurz. Wee lihsihnd tewihm klawmp down thuh stairz, hurdihm kriyihnuhbiht, wihch wuhz uhnhurduh furuh kihd hihz ayj ihn thoz dayz. Hihz sawbz kep kuhmihn uhp buhtween thuh tihks an tawks uhv thuh lihdl wit klawk.

Awskr looks bak aduhs ovurihz naykihd bawdee, prawpt uhp awnihz elboz an neez ovurur. “Alrit. Ihf yew giz wawnuh chihkihn out, juhs gihmee thuh kordr an get thuh hel out.” Wel, hay, wihthuh chalihnj lik that uhkors wee kdn kwiht, so wee huhng ihn thair. Awskr toldur tuh tayk awfur uhndurwair, an Gloreeyuh wuhz guhnuh say no shee woodnt an Awskr muhstuh seen thuh ansur kuhm uhp awnur fays kuhzee hedbuhdihdur, juhs drov thuh tawpuh hihz hed ihtuh hur mouth, kuhdur bawduhm lihp awnur on teeth. Aftur that shee kwiht fuhsihn. Shee wuhzihn uhnkawnshuhs ur enuhthihn, shee juhs lawst awlur fit an juhs lay thair lihmp wil hee puld awf thuh lastuhvur kloz. That spark ihnuriz juhs draynd ouduhvur lik rayn ouduhvuh leekee eevztrawf.

Dawnee an mee stood thair an wacht. Wacht Awskr dew iht tewer, an thenee put awnihz kloz an went downstairz tuh wayt wil wee fihnihsht uhp. I wacht Dawnee dewiht, then hee left, tew, an ihwuhz juhs mee an Gloreeyuh. I awlmos kdn dewiht. Almos dihdn, buhdI new I wuhznt leevihn wihth that kordr, an I kdnt wawk out wihthout getihn suhmthihn foriht, so I endihd uhp dewihn thuh saym thihng thuh uhthur boyz dihd. Shee dihdn kriuh biht, buhduh kuhpul timz hur lowur lihp kwihvurd anI wuhndurd furuh lawng tim wi uh wumihn wood evur dew suhmthihn that maydur so sad. Thawt fur uh lawng tim that seks mayd awl wimihn that sad — thats wi I awlwayz payd muh gurlzuh biht

ekstruh durihn thuh wor. Then I wuhz duhn an awn muh way downstairz, wihth that shinee kordr left awnur bedsid taybul, ihn fruhnuh thuh bibuhl ihn fruhnuh thuh klawk.

I met thuh uhthurz down awn thuh sidwawk. Wihlbrz iz wur awl red fruhm kriihn, an Awskr juhs kep lookihn down at thuh street. Nowuhn sed muhchuh enuhthihn. Wee wawkt thuh last few blawks prihdee muhch ihn silihnts, ar lewt fruhm thuh stor wayihn uhs down.

Ihwuhz yeerz laydur, aftur mee an Dawnee gawt bak fruhm thuh wor, that I fownd out wuht rihlee hapihnd that day. I hurd iht fruhm Dawnee, hew akchuhlee survd ihn thuh saym kuhmpnee wihth Wihlbr ihn thuh wor. Awskr anmee wur over thair tew — Awskr bairlee gawdihz feet awn thuh grown buhforee gawdihmsel shawt an did. Ihwuhz Wihlbr hew tol Dawnee, an Dawnee hew tol mee, an neethur wuhnuhvihm haduh reezihn ihn thuh wurld tuh bulshiht mee, so I buhleev iht like I buhleev ihts thuh Gawdz on truth.

Thuh gurl, Gloreeyuh, wuhz thur sihstur. I swair duh Gawd. Thur own gawdam sihstur. Krist! I tolyuh how muhchuh kordr wuhz wurth bak then, an I ges wuns wee gawdiht Awskr kd onlee thihnk uhbout howihz sihstr, hel, howihz holfamlee kd yewz that kordr, an thuh onlee way tuh gedih wuhz an eevihn trayd, ihgsep hee dihdn hav nuhthihn tuh trayd. Buhd uhkors Gloreeyuh dihd. Heed nevur wawnihd tuh skrewihz on sihstur uhkors. Fihgurd weed leep at thuh chans tuh go furst, an then hee an Wihlbr kd fayk iht an fawlo uhs laydur. Then wen wee prewvduh biht bashful — wel, hihz famlee juhs needihd that kordr. Iht ment an ekstruh meeul furihz hol famlee, thad awl ihz lihdl bruhthurz an sisturz kd hav an ekstruh meeul juhs wuhns, maybe nawt go duh bed hungree, eevihn ihf iht wuhz onlee fur wuhn nit.

Jeezuhz, wuhduh fuhktuhp wurld that wuhz. Layihn yur own sihstur furuh fuhkihn kordr. I bawduh newzpaypr fur morihn that thihs mornihn, an Awskr an Gloreeyuh they — wel, thats juhs thuh way iht wuhz, I ges, an I juhs dihdn no how bad thihngz wur fur suhm foks. Stihl, thatsuh dam hard pihl tuh swawlo.

Jeezuhz. Fur wuhn gawdam kordr.

gedn thuh buhmzruhsh

Wihth awl thuh thihngz that kduh gawn rawng, an that dihd go rawng fur uh lawt uhv foks, I ges I shdn kuhmplayn tew muhch. I dihdn lewz enee chihldrihn, or mi wif. An yuhno lewzihn mi farm, suhmhow that wuhzn az hard tuh tayk az yuh mit thihnk. Prawblee sownz weerd, mee sayihn that, buhdiht mit nawt bee az weerd tuh eneewuhn hew lihvd threw iht.

Wen thuh men fruhm thuh bank kaym – thawuhz Juhli ninteenthurdeethree, bi thuh way – wen thay kaym, I wuhz out ihn thuh west kordr, buhdI saw thur duhst trayul kihkihn uhp furuh miul buhhindihm. I new wuht thay wur kuhmihn for. I new wee wur mor thenuh lihdI buhhind, anuh kar az bihg an blak az that had tuh bee bad newz. I puld mi gluhvz awf mi fihngrz, wiich wur swul uhp lik sawsuhjihz. I ruhmembur drawpihn ihm ihttuh thuh duhst, an juhst standihn thair lookihn at thuh men gedn ouduh thur kar. I stood thair, waytihn for ihm, buhduhkors thay pruhtendiht nawt tuh see mee. Muhstuh thawdI wuhzuh skaircro.

Uh kors Howurd Alihn new dam wel iht wuhz mee out thair – hee wuhz thuh onlee lokuhl man uh thuh three uhvem – saw ihm at thuh church nawt morihnn three weeks buhfor thuh day hee shod uhp wihth thoz tew men an thur paypurz. No dam wuhndur thay pruhtendiht nawt tuh see mee – thay dihdn wawnuh hav tuh wawk out tuh mee, get thur shewz durdee ihn mi feeyuld. So wen I saw mi wif kuhm out awntuh thuh porch, wipihn ur

hantz awf awnurn aypruhn, thats wen I hedihd ihn. Uh kors bi thuh tim I gawt thair sheed awlreedee gawdihm rown thuh kihchihn taybul an stardiht kawfee brewihn.

Ihf I wooduh gawt ihnsid kwihkr I wooduh told Lihleeyuhn nawt tuh bawthur – wee hadn enee duh spair, an thihs wuhzn ihgzaklee uh soshul kawf. Thay wur sihtihn wiht thur baks tuh thuh bak dor wen I kuhm ihn. Nuhnuthem turned tuh look at mee. Mi wif had thuh kawfee pawt ihn ur hand az shee turnd an kawt mee wiht thur iz. Thay wur gray stonz ihnur fays. “Suhm men ar heer tuh see yew, deer,” shee sez, cheeree az uh bee, an goz bak tuh fihksihn thuh kawfee. Nawt wuhnuthem swihvuld uhrown thuh hol tim I wuhz hangihn muh haduhp an wipihn mi boots awf. Thay juhs waydihd, lookihn uhhed, waytihn fur meeduh kuhm rown tuh them. Wen I diht, Howurd, hee wuhz lookihn at mee rit ihn thuh i. Buht soonz az I lookt bak adihm hee gawt reeyul ihnuhrestihd ihn thuh paypurz hee had ihnihz hans, I telyuh that fur shur.

“Mihstur – ” hee buhginz, an wen I shewduh look adihm hee starts uhgin. “Jihm.” Hee meets mi iz uhgen, furuh sekihn, then drawps em bak tuh that paypur. Ihts wuhnuth thoz thihngz wiht thuh kuhpul sheets uh karbuhn ihn iht so evree tim yuh sin yur lif uhway thay gedihd three tims. “Theez men ar fruhm thuh bank, thuh hed awfihs, an thayv gawduh few thihngz tuh say.” Hee ihntruhdewst them – I furget thur naymz now. Mi wif ihtuhruhptihd rit aftur Howurd sed thur naymz, brihngihn thuh kawfee. Shee pord iht ihn thur kuhps. Shee gawd uh ful teekuhp awf thuh kownur an pudihdihn fruhnuth mee. Ihwuhz wawdur. Thuh uhthrz, I kdnt see intuh thur kuhps, buht thay smeld lik kawfee. Sheed gihv them thuh last wee had, an new shee kdnt strech iht tuh for kuhps wiht thout iht taystihn tew week. Wee dihtn hav uhnuhf dam kawfee fur for kuhps.

Shee stood thair thuh hol tim, ruhbihn me buhtween thuh sholdurblad. Iht dihdnt tayk lawng, rihlee. Thay dihdnt shugrkot iht, nawt that Iduh wanihduhm tew. Baysihklee iht wuhz “Yur hous ihz ars. Yew kn kuhntihnuh tuh lihv heer fur thuh suhmur an farm, buhdenee prawfihts ruhvurt tuh uhs. Furthurmor, yew muhst vaykayt thuh premihsihz bi thuh furstuh Janyewaيرة.” I ruhmembur that frayz ihn partihkyuhlur – thuh sihdee banker feluh lookihn me rit ihn thuh fays an telihn mee hee wuhz taykihn mi farm. Wi I dihdn stihkuh pihchfork uhiphz as az thay left, I don kristlee no.

Tha wuhz wuht bawthurd mee, nawt that thay took mi farm, buht thuh way thay dihdiht stuhk ihn mi throt likuh tewthpihk swawlod sidwayz. An uh kors I kn uhndrstand that fur them ihwuhz juhs bihznihs, buhdiht wuhz stihl an ihnsult. Thay wur kuhmihn out tuh mi house tuh tel mee I wuhzn man uhnuhf tuh keep iht, that thayd lawst thur fayth ihn mee. I wuhzn man uhnuhf tuh bee wurth krediht. Hel, Im suhprizd thay dihdn tayk turnz sleepihn wiht mi wif juhs tuh help out uh biht mor.

So I want yuh tew uhnurstand that lewzihn mi farm wuhzihn eeze, buhdiht wuhznt, yuhno, devuhstaytihn. Ihnuh way I felt, I duhno, I ges ruhleevd. Thoz men that day, thay endihd uh lawng struhguhl. Id bihn fitihnuh lewzin baduhl furuh nuhmburuh yeerz. Suhm foksuhd awlredeee gihvihn uhp. Thuh farmz awn both sidz uh mee wur stihl goihn, buht beeyawnd that ihwuhz hihdurmihz wethur tew farmz ihnuhrow wood hav eneebuhdee stihl wurkihn ihm ur nawt. I bet haf thuh foks fur fifdee miulz uhrown wur lawng gawn.

Ihwuhz noihn I wuhz lewzihn that dihd iht. Thuh wurk wuhz draynihn. Ihn thuh urlee yeerz thuh boyz wurihnt old uhnuhf tuh bee muhch help. Wuns thay wur oldur I gawdaz muhch help az I kd fruhm thuh boyz, buht thuh gurlz, I awlwayz felt bad maykihn em wurk out ihn thuh feeyuld. Thay wurkt hard, thuh boyz, buhd nawt az hard az I kduh

maydihm, so mostuh thuh wurk fel awn mee. I wuhz thuh man uh thuh plays, so ihts rit thadiht dihd, buht wurkihn uh farm bi yurself ihn thuh bestuh timz ihz nekst tew ihmpawsihbul, an ihn thoz yeerz ihwuhz absuhlewtleh uhnthihnkubul. An uhkors I dihdn hav thuh muhnee tuh hiyur uh man. Ihn bedur yeerz I had uhp tewuh haf duhzihn, buhdI had tuh let thuh last wuhn go bak ihn thihrdeewuhn. Gawdam neer brok meeduh dewiht. Hee wuhz moruhvuh frend thenuh hiurd han. Buht most uhvihm wur no good eneeway. Cuhpuluh mi nayburz had prawbluhmz wihth thur men – suhmuhvihm wur handee tuh hav rownd, I ges, buht uhthurz, it wuhz lik letihnuh fawkz ihntuh thuh kewp. Kors I had muh on prawbluhmz – Bihl, hee wuhz thuh last man I had, hee dihdn leev mee no choys buht tuh get rihduhvihm. I eevihn hadtuh get help tuh get rihduh hihm. Hee dihdn hav thuh sens tuh get wil thuh getihn wuhz good. So wihth no help, thair I wuhz, beetihn dawn ihntuh thuh feeuldz evree mornihn, getihn chayst out bi duhsk, wen iht gawt so dark I kdnt see wair mi feeyuldz endihd an thuh nayburz stardiht.

Putihn ihn awl that wurk, an nowihn iht wuhznt guhnuh uhmownt tuh shiht, thawuhz eezee tuh gihv uhp. Wawkihn ihn fruhm thuh feeyuld that day, thuh day thuh bankurz kaym, I ruhmembur thihnkihn that at leest Id nevr hav tuh wurk lik that uhgen. I eevihn lef mi gluhvz ihn thuh feeyuld, stept awn em tew, az ihf I kd grindihm ihntuh thuh durt an leev awl mi dayzuh wurk buhhind mee.

Ihwuhz nis, suhmwuhn kuhmihn tuh tel mee I kd gihv uhp. Thats wi I dihdn shout, ur thretihnihm, ur stihk uh pihchfork uhp eneewuhnz as. I juhs nawdiht, sed “I see. Thank yew, genulmen,” an ihsordiht them tuh thuh dor. Thay gawt ihn thur kar. I wacht uhntihl thuh duhst sedld bak awn thuh road. Nuhnuh them evur lookt bak.

An thawuhz that. Nawt eezee, buhd awlihnawl, nawt bad. Mi famlee stihl had gairuhntee uvhuh plays tuh lihv fur at leest uh few muhnths. An I new thur wuhz no poynt ihn triihn thuh land eneemor. I thawdiht wuhzuh brayk fur thuh bedr – thawt now I wuhz freeduh get muhself suhm reeul wurk suhmwair. Thats wen I thawt wurk wuhz stihl out thair duh get – I dihdn fihgur wuht wuhz hapnihn tuh mee wuhz hapnihn tuh evree uhthur man ihn thuh hol kuhntree. Id hurd thur wuhz wurk tuh thuh west, ihn alburduh.

I lef tew mornihnz laydur wihthuh thermuhs uh tee, uh kuhpuluh bihskihts wihch Id et bi mihdday, anuh chaynjuh klothz. I wuhndur how menee thowzihndz uh uhthur peepul dihd thuh saym – awl thuh alburtihtnz hurduh wurk ihn beesee, awl thuh brihdihsh kuhlumbeeyuhnz hurd thur wurk wuhz ihn awntaireeo, thuh awntaireeoihnz went tuh thuh eest kost, an haf thuh mairihtimurz kaym awl thuh way owt tuh manihtobuh. Awl ovur thuh kuhntree, an thuh stayts tew I ges, men wur hedihd awf ihn hops uh findihn wurk. Wurk wuhz lik suhm lawst sihdee then – yewd hed awf ihn surch uhviht at thuh bairihst hihnt thadiht mit ihgzihzt suhmwair. Wuhz lik the ruhsh fur gold awl ovur uhgen – sep ihnsteduh hopihn tuh finduh nuhgiht layihn at thuh bawdm uhvuh streem, we wur lookihn fur eneeplays that had wurk.

I payd fur thuh furst trayn. I bawduh tihkiht that wood get mee az klos tuh kalguree az I kd uhford, an stihl leev thuh pris uhvuh sanwihch ihn muh pawkiht. I bawt wuhn aduhbout fiv that eevnihn – gawt tew tewnuhfihsh. I hayt tewnuh. I juhs bawdihm kuhz thay wur cheepihst. I gayv wuhn tuh thuh gi nekst tuh mee. Hihz stuhmihk wuhz ruhmblihn suh bad yuh kdnt hardlee heer thuh trayn. I ruhmembur wawchihn ihm stuhf iht ihnihz mouth likuh skwuruhl shuhvz ihn nuhts, an thihnkihn thawuhz uhboudaz dihsghustihn az yew kd

get. I wuhz three dayz fruhm that muhself, snapihn at fewd likuh starvd dawg aftur hamburgur.

I gawdawf thuh trayn thuh nekst day, uhbout dihnurtime, at suhm lihdl town juhs buhfor thuh bordur duh alburduh. Wuhzihn muhch morduh thuh plays than thuh wawdur tanks anuhn outhous, ihgsep fur uhbout for houzihz. I gawdout, kuhz thats wair mi tihkiht went tew. Nevur uhkurd tuh mee tuh tri tuh rid lawngr – I wuhz newduh beeyihn durt por, an stihl thawt awnihstee hadihts ruhwordz. That furs nit chaynjd mee. Fihgurd I kd nawk awn enee uh thuh dorz ihn town an geduh plays tuh sleep furuh nit. No madr how por I wuhz, awn mi farm yew kd at leest get thuh barn anuh bihduh brekfihst, meegur ur nawt. Id onlee bihn ihn thoz kloz furuh kuhpuluh dayz, buht thuh wumihn hew ansurd rihnkuld hur noz uhp lik Id nayuld uh ded skuhnkwewer dor.

“Helo, mam.” I sed, mi hat ihn mi hand at thuh sit uhvur. “Im kawduh mit short, an Im wuhndrihn ihf yew mit havuh plays I mit sleep fur tuhniht – eevihnuh sheduhd bee fin, ihf yewd bee so – ” Thuh dor kuhdawf thuh restuh wuhdI ihtendiht tuh say. I stood thair, shawkt. Id nevr ruhn ihtuh suhmthihn lik that buhfor. I ihgspektiht hurduh opihn ihduhp uhgen, say thuh nawb slihpt ouduh hur han, dredfulee soree, yes, uhkors, kuhm awn ihn, kuhm awn ihn. Buht that dihdnt hapihn. I stood awn thuh vuranduh fur lawng uhnuf fur that tewuhv hapihnd, ihf iht wuhz guhnuh. I shduh noihn then wuht lay ihn stor fur mee, buht lik I say I wuhz newduh beeyihn por. I dihdnt no that that wumihn had prawblee had tuh keepur durt uhndr lawknkee ur suhmwuhn wood hawp awf thuh trayn an pihlfur iht. I don blaymur tew muhch, tho. I juhs wihs shee wooduh ihgsplaynd hursel, ur at leest juhs shuht thuh dor, nawt slamdiht. I kduh duhn wihtout thuh fays tew.

Buhdat leest shee dihdn sihk eneee dawgz awn mee. I nevur gawt yewst tuh that. Suhm farmurz wood dewiht juhs at thuh siduhyuh – awluhvuhshuhdihn uhkuhpuluh jurmihn shepurd mawngrul mihksihz wood tair at yuh fruhm ouduh nowair, an yewd hav tuh ruhn lik hel juhs tuh stay uhliv – thuh dawgz wur that meen. Traynd that way, an kep that way bi beeyihn huhngree awl thuh tim.

Dihdn hapihn at thuh sekihn hous, neethr. That hous wuhz thuh onlee uhthur plays ihn town that lookt adawl prawmihsihng. Eevihn wihtout thuh dawgz, I wihsh tuh hel I wooduh left iht uhlon. Buhtno, not mee, I gawduh go an nawkawn that dor likuh – uh wuhduhyuhkawliht, ay . . . uh . . . uh . . . yuhno, them lihdl gurlz that kuhm rownd ihn thoz lihdl yewnihformz. Selihn kookeez. Lik boy skouts, sept ihn skurts . . .

Eneewayz, uh wumihn ansurd, lihsihnd tuh almos az muhchuv wuhd I had tuh say az thuh furst laydee, then hawlurd ovur hur sholdur ihntuh thuh hous “Vihnsiht! Kliv! Cuhmeer!” I akchuhlee stardiht smilihn, I thihnk. Hur voys dihdnt gihv nuhthihn uhway. Thuh boyz wur kuhmihn tuh show mee tewuh rewm, I fihgurd. Ur at leest tayk mee uhrown tuh thuh lihdl shed Id spid uhrown bak soz I kd sedl ihn fur thuh nit. Nop. Theez boyz – wuhn maybee sihksteen, an biht likuh bulmews, anuh lihdl bruthur, muhstuh bihn fihfteen ur sihksteen ihmself, kaym uhp tuh thuh fruhnt dor, looktuhtmee, an then kaym charjih.

Thay kep kuhdawf brewm handlz ihnsid thur dor. Thats thuh kinduh timz ihwuhz. Thay kep brewm handlz ihnsid thur dor juhsihn kays suhmwuhn lik mee kuhm uhlawng. Ihn wuhn sekihnd thay wur empte handihd anihn thuh nekst thay eech haduh lengthuh handl. Thayd bihn sawd down tewuhbout three feet. Ihtsuh good thihng I wuhz kwihk awn mi feet — awlwayz wuhz. I outranihm. Hayt tuh thihnk wuht wooduh hapihnd ihf I dihdnt. Gedihn hiht biuh man ihz wuhn thihng — thel nawk yuh down tihl yuh lurn thadihf yuh geduhp thur

guhnuh nawkyuh down uhgen. Boyz lik thoz tew, tho, thay get tew ihgsitihd. I haduh kuhpuluh ruhnihnz with kihdz, uhnuhf tuh no that farm ur sihdee, iht don madur. Kihdz ihz kihdz an wen thay puduh tuhch awn yuh thay keep adiht tihl thur good an redee tuh kwiht. Thay dont hiht yuh tuh teech uh lesihn, thay hihtyuh kuhz thay kan. Thayv gawt tew muhch tuh prewv at that ayj. Yah, Im reeul glad I outran thoz boyz — Im shur I woodihnuh wawkt uhway wihth awl mi teeth ur mi bonz ihn thuh rit nuhmbur uh peesihz ihf thayduh gawt holduhvmee. Az iht wuhz, thuh wuhn ur tew waks thay dihd land buhfor I gawduhptuh speed lef brewzihz that dihdn fayd fur tew weeks.

I ruhmembur that wuhn ihn partihkyuhlur buhkuhz ihuhz thuh furst wuhn. Ihwuhz thuh hardihs lesihn tuh lurn, so ihts nawt wuhn Il evur furget. Kors ihn thuh nekst for yeerz that kinduh thihng muhstuh hapihnduh huhnurd timz. Suhmtimz I gawt kawt, an then ihwuhz best ihf yuh dihdnt fit bak. Yewzhuhlee ihfyuh juhs layd down an kuhvurd uhp wuht yuh kd, awl thayd dew wuhz nawk yuh uhround fur uhwil, an wen thay kwiht playihn wihth yuh an wenuhway yewd onlee havuh few bihg blew brewzihz oruh sor spawt awn yur sid wair thay kihkt yuh. Suhmtimz yuh had tuh fit, oryuh dihd kuhz yuh new yuhd wihn, buht most timz ihwuhzuh bad ideeyuh tuh gedihm riuld uhp. Oudawn thuh rodz yew wur awlwayz uhlon, an aynt no man I evur medihn town kdnt find suhmwuhn tuh help fitihzfits. Mos timz yewd tayk wuhn dam good askihkihn. Suhmtimz iht felt good, lik ihwuhzuh wayduh pay fur thuh aygz ur bred yuhw fihlcht. Uhlawduh timz yuhw sihmplee took iht, noihn thuh men hew dihdiht wuruh hayulstorm ur uhnuhthur weekuhv wihnd uhway fruhm thuh saym rayulkarz yew wur ihn. Mostuhthuh tim ihwuhzihn mee thay wur beetihn uhp awn — ihwuhz how klos thay wur tuh beeihn mee thay wur fitihn, triihn tuh get thur lihks ihn awn awl thuh yeerzuh mihzuree thayd had.

Thats wuhdI ruhmembur most. Dont no wi, buht fur mee thats wuht thoz yeerz wur, tim spent waytihn ihn traynyardz fur thuh nekst trayn goihn west. Awveeyuhslee awl thoz grand planz I had nevur pand out. Thair wurihnt jawbz ihn thuh orchurdz ihn beesee — ur nawt uhnuf fur awl thuh peepl hew kaym lookihn. Enuhwayz I no uh lawduh giz hew hiht thuh kost, an wen thay kdn geduh jawb thair, thay went down south tuh kalihfornyuh. Hurd thur wur jawbz down thair. Kors thair wur dam neer az menea uhmairihkuhnz ihn beesee az kanaydeeyuhnz. Mostuh them had kuhm north uhp thuh kost — thay wur lik uhs, so brok yuh kdnt nawt go lookihn furuh jawb. That wooduh bihn thuh wurst, tuh nawt go suhmwair an then heer thay wur hiurihn aftur awl. Yuh had tuh chaysiht.

Lik I say, iht dihdn tayk tew lawng buhfor I wuhz ridihn thuh rawdz. Thur wuhzuh reeyul nak tuh dewihn iht. Ihf yew wur reeul smart yewd bee thair wen thuh traynz puld ihntuh thuh yard. Thawuhz best, tuh wawchihm uhnlod thuh trayn, tuh wach thuh uhthr giz por awfiht — thoz por fuhkihn ihdeeihts hew thawt getihn awf ihn thuh plays yew wur leevihn wood bee wurthwiul. Yew new bedur – thats wi yew wur leevihn. Yewd siht thair an wawch uhntihl thuh ihnspekturz — yew kd tel hew thay wur bi thur bihlee klubz — gawt duhn thuh wuhnsovur awn thuh trayn an went fur kawfee aftur thuh traynuhd bihn awl lodihd uhp. Yewd wach wair awl thay lookt, an ihf thay onlee chekt insidur uhndurneeth, then yewd klim tuh thuh tawp uhvuh kar, lay down flat, an hop lik hel thay dihdn find yuh. Ihn thuh laydur yeerz, wen thuh traynz wur wayd down mor wihth uhnpayd pasihnjurz then wihth kargo, then thay chektuh lawt mor.

Thuh uhthur wayduh dewiht wuhz tuh wayt uhntihl thuh trayn wuhz goihn, juhs goihn fast uhnuhf that yew kd kech ihtaduh good ruhn, an hawp awn. That way yew neerlee awlwayz gawt seen, buhdiht dihdn madr – ihwuhz tew layt an thuh kar ihnspektur woodn

kech yuh. Wee kawldihm bulz, thoz ihspekturz. Wee haydihdihm fur gihvihn uhs uh bad tim. Skreemd evree naysm ihnthuh book adihm, toldihm wuht weed duhn wihth thur muhthurz thuh nit buhfor — that kinduh thihng. Tew uhs thay wur helbent awn stawpihn uhs fruhm feedihn ar famleez. Uhkors iht wuhzn thair fawlt wee wur lihvihn thuh way wee wur, buht thuh bulz wur thuh wuhnz wihth thur bewts awn ar faysihz so ihs them wee haydihd, nawt thuh banksur thuh rayul linzur thuh pawlihtihshuhnz. Wee spat awnihm evree chans wee kd — pihst awnihm fruhm thuh tawpzuh traynkarz, dihd evree dam thihng wee kd tewihm. Kors wee wooduh taykihn thur jawb ihnuh mihniht. Ihwuhz wurk. Pay. Eevihn wen wee wur pihsihn awn thur faysihz, wee new thay wur dewihn ihgzaklee wuht wee wood, onlee thay wur thuh wunz gawt thuh chans tuh dewiht.

Thair wur awlwayz giz out thair thaduhd bihn ridihn thuh rayulz lawngur then yew. Thay dihdn ihgzaklee get ruhspekt, buhtyuh tendihd tuh keep yur mouth shuht rownd them. Thay new howduh ged on. Ihwuhz wuhnuh thoz giz — gawd, hee muhstuh bihn sihkstee yearz old bak then, tawt mee thuh thurd way tuh get yurself awnuh trayn. I onlee evur dihdihd twis, an that wuhz morihn uhnuhf fur meeihn thihs liftim, lemee tel yuh.

Now yew kd nevur juhs lay uhndr thuh karz — eevihn ihf thuh bul dihdn klim uhptuh chek thuh tawpuh eech kar lik hee wuhz spostuh, no madr how layzee hee wuhz hee awlwayz chekt uhndurneeth. Ifh yuh layd uhndr thuh trayn yew wur guhnuh get kawt — onlee ihdeeuhts dihd that. Buht thay nevur chekt thuh traks juhst outsid thuh yard, so wuht yew kd dew wuhz lay down thair, maybe uh kordr mil out. Bi then thuh trayn stihl hadn pihkt uhp muhch speed, anyew kd grab awn pridee eezee, an bewst yurself uhp. I wuhz skaird shihtlihs uh getn kawt bi thuh kowkechr, buht thair wuhz at leestuhn ihnchur tew tuh spair. Ihwuhz reeyul lowd uhp ihn thair, buht yew kd baysihklee lay down awn thuh rawdz,

an suhm eevihn sed yew kd go tuh sleep, buht that, thats juhs bulshiht. No way. Ihwuhz fultim tuh keep yurself fruhm fawlihn out. Buht wuhns yew wur mewvihn no wuhn kd see yuh. Kdn rihlee kech good sleep enecwair els ihgsep ihnsid thuh karz, buht most timz yew wur awn tawp an thur wuhz thuh rihs kuh fawlihn awf, uhnles yuh tid yurself awn wihth yur belt.

Eevihn ihn thuh kars thair wuhz awlwayzuh chans suhwuhn wood kuhm lookihn tuh mes wihth yuh. Thuh furst tim I akchuhlee gawduhp awn thuh rawdz themselvz I dam neer fel out — I thihnk I wooduh ihf thuh old gi hadn grabd awntuh mee. Wihsh I newihz naym, buht nowuhn evur rihlee ihntruhdewst themselvz. That hol bruhturhood uhvthuh rod thihng yuh heer uhbout nowuhdayz ihz bulshiht. Yuh dihdn tel peepl yur naym kuhz yuh dihdn wawnuh uhdmiht that that smelihn, stihnkihn piuluhshiht wuhz yew. Yuhno evree wuhns ihnuhwiul I yewstuh kechuh fays ihnuh krowd that lookt fuhmihlyur — uhlawduh yeez yuhngur, ihnuh bawkskar. Thayd rekuhgniz mee tew evree wuhns ihnuhwiul. Yewd nevur go uhp tewihm. Nevur ihntruhdews yurself az hew yuh rihlee wur an ask howee maydout. Thaduhd bee likuh fli tawkihn uhbout thuh last bihduh duhng — hay, Al, howdiht tayst? Nuhf korn for yuh? Suhn thihngz yuh don wawnuh bee ruhmindihd uhv. Ihts nawt suhmthihn yuh wawnuh reelihv.

Eneeway . . . wair wuhz I? O, ya, thuh old man shod mee how tuh rid thuh rawdz. Thuh furs tim hee lent meeuh hand. Thuh sekihnd tim I dihdih bi muhself, an dam neer did thair, tew. Ihwuhz morihnuh yeer past that furst tim wen I trid tuh dew ihduhgen. Now Iv awlwayz bihn prihdee kairful, an I rihlee dihdn wawnuh get kawt bi enee bul, so I lay down awn thuh traksuh biht furthur out then I shduhv. Wen that trayn kuhm bi iht lookt lik ihwuhz goihnuh huhnurd milz an owur — prawblee wuhzn dewihn moren thurdeefiv, buht that

wuhz plenee fastuhnuf. Wen I grabd awntuh thuh uhndursiduh that kar iht dam neer rihpt mi armz rit awf at thuh sholdurz. Felt lik I gawt kihkt biuh pairuhv klidzdayulz. Stihl huhngawn, tho, urIduh bihn spladurd. Puld uhp awntuh thoz rawdz an lay thair tihl thuh trayn stawpt. Dont rihlee ruhmembur how muhch laydur that wuhz, kuhz I wuhz hurtihn suh bad I lawst awl trakuh tim.

Eevenchuhlee thuh trayn dihd stawp, tho, kuhz iht needihd tuh tayk awn wawdur. Thats wen I gawt kawt. I dihdn eevihn no Id bihn monihn thuh hol tim. Ges I muhstuh bihn tho, an I juhs kdn heer muhself. Thuh rayul bul kd, tho — wawkt riduhp an yankt mee out wihtthouduh wurd.

Dont gedenee ideeuhz that Id nevr bihn kawt buhfor. ovur thoz cuhpuluh yeerz I prawblee sawuh huhnurd dihfriht lihdl selz, ur wurk kamps, lik thay kawldihm. Them wur thuh ouduh dorz prihzihnz, wihtthout rewf. Thay wur skadurd awl ovur. Fruhm thuh west kost kleeer tuh thuh mihdl uh awntaireeo. Wuhns I ran ihntuh French I turnd muhself uhrown — wuhz hard uhnuhf tuh geduh jawb ihn wuhn langwihj. Buhsidz, gedn thron ihn thuh tank wuhznt awlwayz suhchuh bad thihng. That tim Id buhstihd uh bon ihn muh sholdr, thuh kawlurbon I thihnk ihwuhz, an wuhn thuh giz at thuh prihzihn sediht an put mi arm ihnuh slihng so ihtuhd heeyul strayt. Sed Id puld mi arm rit ouduh mi sholdur. Hurt likuh buhgur wenee pawpt iht bak ihn.

Eevihn with awl I went threw, lewzihn mi farm, lewzihn mi hom, awl thuh prihzihnz, awl that, Iv put thadawl buhind mee. Ya, awluhviht hurt, buhdI kn bruhshihdawf. Awl thuh thihngz I dihd, awl thuh thihngz thuh wuruhld dihd tuhmee, I kn chawkihduhp tuh thuh wuruhld goihn krayzee fur uhwiul.

Onlee wuhn thihng I stihl kant geduhrown — ihd hapihnd aftur uhbout tew yearz awn thuh rod. I wuhz out ihn Wihnihpayg bi then, an aftur uhbout tew weeksuh snihfihn uhrown I wuhz redee tuh hed out tuh tri mi luhk suhmwair els. Thuh mayn yard ihn wihnihpayg wuhz gardihd good. Wihnihpayg had thuh riuht, yuhno. Ihwuhz awlwayz sorduhvuh hawt spawt fur truhbuhl. Fur yearz both buhfor an aftur thuh riuht evreewuhn wuhz awl keeyd uhp, so thuh rayul linz mayd shur tuh hiur awn lawtsuh bulz thair. Buhsidz, sihns wihnihpayg wuhz suhchuh mayjur shihpihn poynt, thay haduh keepuh hol armee uhvihm. So gedihn awnihn Wihnihpayg wuhz tuhf, eevihn wihth so menee traynz. Buhfor enee trayn rould ouduh thuh yard ihn Wihnihpayg iht gawt chekt ihnsid, outsid, awntawp, an uhndurneeth. Thay wen ovuriht likuh menuhntit buyihn uh hors. No way kd yuh lay ihn ihn Wihnihpayg — yuhd get hawldihn that way fur shur. Thuh onlee hop yuh had wuhz tuh kech iht ruhnihn. Buht that akchuhlee dihdnt poz muhchuhvuh prawblihm mos timz. Thair wur lihdl skruhzbuh bushihz tuh hid ihn fur thuh first few milzuh trak. Thay bihlt uhp speed reel kwihk tho, wihthout enee turnz tuh slowem down. Buht thats wair I waydihd. Wair we awl waydihd. Uhlawduh dayz ihn Wihnihpayg yew kd heer thuh treez breethihn, thay wur so fuluh peepl waytihn tuh ruhn fur thuh trayn. Wuhnuh thuh dayz I wuhz thair ihwuhz raynihn — juhstuh drihzl, buht that wuhz uhnuhf tuh dihscurihj uhlawduh peepl. Awl yuh needihd wuhz tuh kech uhp tewuh trayin, juhmp adiht, an lewz yur grihp, buhst yur fays awn thuh ground, ur awnuh ruhng awn thuh ladr. Ihf yuh gawdiht reel bad, yuhd enduhp uhndr thuh weeulz. Crayzee thihng ihz, I yewzhulee foundiht eezeeur tuh gedawn ihn thuh rayn. Thats wen thuh bulz wur layd uhp ihn suhm dri plays wihthuh bawdl an storeezuh thuh last buhm thayd beet thuh tar ouduhv.

Wihnihpayg wuhz dihfurht. Thay wur uhlurt. Thay wur redee furuhs.

That day thur kdnuh bihn moren twenee uhvuhs awn eethur siduh thuh trak. Wee waydihd, holdihn ar breth almos, uhntihl wee kd heer thuh trayn. Heerihn iht kuhm, yewd mach yur breethihn tewiht — nevr trid tew, iht juhs hapihnd that way. Yew kd feeul ihts speed bihldihn ihn yur chest az yur breths gawt shordur. Bi thuh tim yew kd akchuhlee see iht yur hart wuhz goihn uhmiul uhmihiht. Uh gi uhbout ten feet tuh mi rit brok furst — ran wihthuh lihmp so bad hee miduh bihn bedurduh krawl. Eneeway, soonz hee brayks kuhvur weer awl awf afturihm.

Thuh wayduh gedawn wuhz tuh swarmiht, an fidiht out fur thuh good spawts, thuh bawkskarz wihth fewd ur suhmthihn sawft tuh lay awn. Ihn wihnr yuh wawnihd livstawk karz, ihf yew kd gedihm, tuh keep yuh worm. Az soonz wee wur awl oudihn thuh alee buhtween thuh treelin an thuh traklin, thuh spawt thats fihld wihth bihtsuh blak shayul ur ihn suhm spawts wihth gravul, thuh trayn blew ihts wihsuhl. That klos yur skuhl felt likuh tewnihhn fork. Awluhvuhsudihn giz pawpt uhp fruhm evreewair — thuh trayn wuhznt mewvihh az fast az iht shduh bihn — maybee fihfteen, twenee milz an owur an wee thawt wee wur luhkee foriht. Thuh trayn wuhzihnuh deekoy — no wuhn wooduh bihn fewl uhnuhf tuh wayst thuh muhnee awnan emtee trayn, buhdiht wuhz bayt. Mee beehh prihdee kwihk awn mi feet, I reecht thuh trayn uhbout furst. Gawt thair so fast I nevr eevihn saw thuh bulz pawp out. I wuhz lookihn aduh ladr awn thuh siduhvuh kar, triihnuh duhsid wuht ruhng tuh grab at. I kawt awn smewth, an wuhz hafway uhp thuh ladr buhfor I hurd thuh furst gi fawl awf. Wenawf wihthuh yel, an bownst wenee hiht thuh ground, ihnsteduh rolihn lik yuh triduhdew. Ihwuhz thuh man wihth thuh lihmp. At furst I thawdeed slihpt awf, an dihdn eevihn look tuh see ihf eneethihng els miduh maydihm fawl. Ihwuhz wen I hurduh strihnguh kursihz that I lookt bak. Thuh kar buhind mee thairzuh gi lik mee, klihngihn tewuh ladur,

anuh step uhbuhvihm awnihz ladr wuhzuh bul drestihn nayvee blew lik thay awlwayz wur. Wawnihd tuh look lik reeul kawps, I ges. Thuh bul wuhz kihkihnihm ihn thuh forhed, ur stawmpihn awnihz nuhklz. I dihdn wawch thawuhn fael — I wuhz bihzee lookihn out fur mee bi then — uhkors Id fihgurd oudiht wuhzuh trap, buht that woodn stawp eneewuhn ihn thoz dayz. I fihgurd suhmhow thay mit mihs mee, ur I mit bee aybul tuh pushihm awl awf thuh trayn — hew noz?

Awl I new wuhz I haduh hold awn that trayn an I wuhznt gihvihn ihduhp fur eneethihng shorduhvuh kluhbihnthuh hed. I staird strayduhp at thuh ski thuh hol tim uhp that ladur — ihwuhz onlee for mor steps, buhdI fihgurd awn evree wuhnuhvuhm that Id see suhm bluhdee bulz hed stuk out, lookihn at me, grihnihn wiht krookiht teeth. Nevur rihlee uhkurd tuh mee tihl now — awl thuh bulz had bad teeth. Maybee thawuhz wuhdiht took tuh get hiurd ihn thoz dayz. Eneewuhn uh biht gat tewtht muhstuh haduhn ej awn thuh uhthurz wen thay went lookihn fur wurk. Maybee suhmwuhn thawdiht maydihm look tuhf. I duhno.

I maydiht awl thuh wayduh thuh tawp wihtout seeihn wuhn — kors mi luhk nevur stayd good fur lawng. I gawt tuh thuh tawp, juhs tuh thuh spawt wair yuh shihmee ovur tuh lay down reeul low an hang awn. An then I saw thuh bewts. Uh pairuh duhstee blak bewts. Bulz bewts. I kd tel that rit awf kuhz eneebuhdee awn thuh rod, thair shewz wur worn ridout, an thihs feluhz bewts stihl had thihk soulz awnihm. Helz belz, I kd see thru min ihn atleest tew spawts. I lookt uhp ihtewihz fays, an wen I saw hew iht wuhz iht nevur uhkurd tuh mee tuh tri tuh kuhvr uhp. I rekuhgnizd thuh fays uhmeedeeuhtlee. Ihwuhz Bihl, thuh hiurd feluh I hadtuh let go. I hadnt seenihm sihns thuh day I tawdihm tuh keepihz noz, an wuhdevur els, ouduh uhthur peepulz bihznihs. Kors I hadn fihgurd awn seeihnihm uhgen,

wihth thuh way we pardihd cuhmpnee. Buhdee hadn ayjd muhch ihn thuh yeerz, so I gawdihm riduhway.

Hee gawt mee riduhway, tew. Hee sez tuh mee “Howdee, Jihm” an ihts ihs voys thats chaynjd. Hee yewstuh bee flapihnihz guhmz awl thuh tim. Uhlawduh thuh tim hee wuhz gripihn uhhout suhmthihn, ur maykihn lihdl jokuht peepl, then lafihn adihm wihthihz mouth wid opihn eevihn ihfee wuhz eetihn. Yuhno Bihl, hee dihdn hav purfihk teeth, thats fur shur. Uhnyewzhuwul furuh man tuh jok az muhch azee dihd — hee wuhz awlwayz jokihn uhrown wihth peeplz kihdz anee thawduh ihmself azuh laydeez man, eevihn tho hihz teeth wur brown az tee. Wihth them teethuh hihz, iht shdihnuh bihnuh suhpriz thadee shod uhp azuh rayul bul. Weerd. Id nonihm mostuh mi lif, rit fruhm ar skewul dayz. Woodn ihgzaklee dihscribihm azuh charmur, buhdee wuhdnt uh bad gi. Thats not tuh say meihn him nevr had enee truhbuhlz, cuhz we dihd, buhdee wuhdnt uh bad gi mostuhthuh tim. Haduh wif an kihdz sumwair thadee dihdn pay muhch uhtenchuhn tew, buhdee dihd sendur mune evree now an uhgen. Ur at leestee dihd wen I newihm. Buhdawl I hurd ihnihz voys awn thuh trayn wuhzuh kinduh haytrihd that didihn buhlawng thair. Id eevihn opihnd muh mouth tuh say hi bak tewihm, an thats wen thuh klubb hiht mee. Wuhzuh dam good shawt, tew. Gawt mee kleen, rit ihn thuh senur uhthuh forhed. Hurt likuh suhnuhvuhbihch, buhdihd dihdn nawk mee sihlee, so I kep hangihn awn. Kors awl that ment wuhz that hee kd smak mee uhgen — wihchee dihd. That wuhn hiht mee awn thuh lef sid suhmwair. Thuh tempul prawblee, kuhz aftur thuh sekihnd shawt uh lit wenawf ihn mi hed an I don ruhmembur fawlihn. Fruhm thuh brewzihz, I fihgur I muhstuh bownst awfuh thuh ladur. Mi bak gawt skraypt tuh hel awn thuh stonz wen I hiht thuh ground. Reebust mi sholdur tew. Kd tel bi thuh way iht juhs kinduh huhng thair.

Thay haduh padeee waguhn foruhs — uhkuhpul muhstuh maydiht bak ihtuh thuh bushihz, buht thay kawt mostuhvuhs. Bihl wawkt mee awl thuh way bak tuh thuh waguhn ihmself. Muhstuh bihn tew miyulz fruhm wair I fel awf. I trid tawkihn tewihm uh kuhpuluh timz, sayihn hay Bihl, howz thihngz. Wuhdevur, yuhno, triihn tuh showihm I newee wuhz juhs dewihnihz jawb an that I dihdn holduh gruhj, buhdevreetim I dihd hee juhs pusht me uhhd ur wakt mee wihth that dam kluhb. Hee wuhz good wihthiht, tew — new rit wair tuh pudiht. Buhtween thuh sholdurblydz, ur at thuh smawluh yur bak, wair yuh dont gawt no meet awn yuh tuh kooshihn iht. Wuhz sor az hel furuh week. Thuh brewzihz muhstuh bihn uhglee az sihn, buhdI nevr sawem, so I kant say fur shur.

Thuh last thing I ruhmembur uhbout Bihl ihz wen I wuhz stepihn uhp ihtuh thuh waguhnn. Az I wuhz bentovur, stepihnuhp, hee rayzd that kluhb uhp an brawdihd down hard az hee kd awn mi sholdur, thuh smashtuhp wuhn. O yoy yoy dihdee nayul meeu good wuhn. Nawkt mee kleerduh thuh dekuhthuh truhk, an slamd thuh dor shuht awn mi toz thuh furst tim hee trid tuh lawk thuh dorszuhp. Mi shewz sayvd mee fruhm that wuhn, buhtweene nawkt mee awn thuh solz uhv mi feet wihth that kluhb I felt iht awl thuh way uhp tuh mi neez — lik I say, thair wuhzn muhch left awn thuh bawduhm uh mi shewz tuh bee muhch ihnsuhlayshuhn uhgenstuh shawt lik that. Wuhns I drew uhp mi feet hee shuht thuh dor fur good.

Thuh shawt tuh mi sholdur maydiht so I kdn eevihn turn mi hed furuh kuhpul weeks. I hurd suhmthihn snap wenee hihtmee — yuhno iht nevr rihlee heeuld awl thuh way. Stihl ayks wen I rayz mi arm uhbuhv mi hed, an wen ihts wedout. I kant fur thuh lif uhmee fihgur wi ihn thuh hel hee kaireed awn lik that. Hee shdntuh had nuhthihn uhgenst mee — I kepihm awn az lawng az I kd, buhdihn thuh end I wuhdihn eevihn payihn ihm anee rihlee lef

mee no choys. An I stihl toldihm wenee left that I wuhz soree duh seeihm go. Eevihn aftur awl thihs tim thats thuh thihng I kant get past. Ihf I kd tel muhsel hee dihdn rekuhgniz mee, then I kd juhs say hee wuhz dewihnihz jawb (eevihn ihf hee dihd taykuh partihkyuhlur uhmownuh plezhur ihniht) buht thuh thihng ihz thadee new hew I wuhz. Damiht, hee new. Go fihgur. Iht don mayk no sens.

Wel, ihts nawt lik thawuhz thuh enduh thihngz. I wuhz stihluh wil lawngur awn thuh rod aftur that. Uhnuthr yeer eneeway, azuh maduruh fakt. Nevur wen hom thuh hol tim, eevihn wen I wuhz ihn thuh aireeyuh. Uhv kors bi then thuh wif an kihdz wur adur fawthurz farm, rownduhbout Esturhayzee. I kdnt geduh jawb eneewair, dewihn eneethihn. Moslee I romd uhrown, ur spent tim at mi bruhthrz, uhp northuh Dawfihn, buhdI dihdn rihlee feel rit thair, askihn ihm tuh feed mee wenee kd bairlee keepihz own caird for, an moslee Id lit out uhgihn afturuh weekurso. I spent suhm tim wihth muh wif adur dadz, buhfor I finlee gawduh jawb ih thuh sihdee an stardiht urnihn uh wayj uhgen. I hardlee ruhmemburd mi kihds, speshlee thuh gurlz. I kant say thay lihvd wel adur dadz. Thihngz wur bad thair tew, buhd at leest thay gawt fed, wihch wuhz moren I kd prawmihsihm. An thuh best thihn thadevur hapihnd wuhz wenee did – hee had uh hol buhnch uh muhnee sayvd uhp. Beeihn az old azee wuhz, hee hadihn evur put suhmuhch azuh dawlur ihn thuh bank. Furst thihng wee dihd wenee did wuhz buy bak ar hom fruhm thuh bank. Gawdiht reeul cheep. Lesihn I payd foriht thuh furst tim uhrown. Payd thuh down paymihnt ihn cash. That buhstihd uhs ugen, but at leest wee new we haduh plays tuh lihv that wee wuhznt guhnuh havtuh gi hv uhp.

Awl them yeerz, tho, I juhs dihd wuhdevr I hadtuh dewduh keep uhliv. Nevur dihd tel muh wif suhmuh thihngz I hadtuh dew eethur. I kdnt tel hur thuh kinduh anuhmul them yeerz mayd mee. That wooduh bihn tew hard.

Buht thihngz havuh wayuh wurkihn out. Wen thuh sekuhn wor kaym, evreethihng gawt bedur. Suhdihnlee thur wuhz wurk uhgihn. Ya. Thihngz gawt bedur fur evreewuhn – ihgsep fur thoz that gawt kihldihn thuh wor. Hel, eevihn wihth thuh way thihngz wur, maybe thay wur stihl bedur awf. At leest yew kd blaym awl thuh shiht yuh saw awn thuh wor. Buhdat hom, wel, thur juhs wuhzihn no ihgzplaynihniht.

grashawpur nuhpshulz

Uh met muh wif ihn thuh yeeruh thuh grashawpur. Muh grankihdz, thay thihnk thats fruhm thuh zodeeyak thuh chineez yewz, buhdiht aynt. Ihts fruhm thuh praireez, tho lawng uhnuhf uhgo thayew wont ruhmembur iht. Fur mos peepl, ur at lees farmihn peepul enuhwayz, askihn uhbout thuh duhpreshuhn1 maykm thihnkuh wuhnuh tew thihngz, er maybe both. Thuh furs ihzuhv thuh durt blowihn ihn sheets thihkuhz wayvz uh thuh grayt fluhd. Thats thuh wuhn that stihks wihth mos peepl. Ihts thuh seenz thay lik tuh play awn thuh teevee now fruhm them old graynee blakihnwit fihlmz. Hel, bak then thuh wihnd had suhmuhch soyyul ihniht thuh wihmihn kdnt hang out thuh warshihn furuh kuhpul suhmurz – ihf yuh dihd, evreethihn fruhm stawkinz tuh towulzd kuhm ihnuhz blakuhz peeyanuh keez.

Thairz uhnuhthr pihkchur, tho. Iht mit nawt bee az noihn, buhdihts thuh onlee wuhn Iv seen mewv men tuh teerz. Thatsuh sit yuh kant get yewstew, wawchihn men hew went threw thuh wor wihthout blihnkihn weep uhntihl thur ruhn dri. That dam ruhst.

Uhmajihn yur thihnkihn that finlee, aftur awl that struhguhl an stuhburnnihs, yewv manihjd tuh koksuh fin, ful, tawl krawpuh weet ouduh thuh grown. Iht fawt yuh evree stepuh thuh way, buht thair ihdihz. Yuh ruhn yur hanz ovur thuh fin, ful hedz – an thuh weet mewvz uhway fruhm yer tuhch. At furs yuh thihnk ihts yur fawlt, yuh gawdur rawng, n so yuh grab at uhnuhthur wuhn, n then wen that wuhn tuhmbulz tuh yur feet yuh get reeyul

sihreeuhs reeyul kwihk an huhnkur down tuh taykuh look. Ihd ihdnt hard tuh see wen yuh look at thuh stawk — an ornj pach for, fiv ihnchihz uhp. Furuh sekihn mor yuh kant buhleev iht — yuh push ovruh few mor juhsihn kays thuh furs tew wur trihks, uruh duhlewzhuhn, er maybeuh nastee jok. Thay swihng uhway juhsuhz eeze, lik thuh feeduhv uh lihndt man, n fawl ovuraz hevee azuhn ok kuhmihn down. Yur hanz riz uhp uhway fruhm yer wayst tihl thur chest hi — thuh hiduh thuh weet, kuhz ihts — ur wuhz — uh good krawp. Slolee, yuh wawk thruw yur feeyuldz, yur feeyuldz kuhzyuh wurktihm, nawt juhs kuhz yuh onihm. Yur kuhtihnuh swath threw thuh gold, layihn iht tuh wayst. An suhdihndlee yur ruhnihn, ruhnihn tuh get ouduh situh evreethihng. Wihth yur armz lik that, strayt oudat yur sidz, yuh muhst look lik uh kihd maykbuhleevihn heezihn airplayn. Eevenchuhlee yur ihgzawstihd, nawt fruhm thuh ruhnihn buht fruhm thuh lif, thuh hol gawdam lif, an yuh siht down ihn thuh mihduluh thuh for foot weet an kri, an eevihn ihn that yeer thuh wawdur suhks ihntuh thuh urth lik thairzuh gofur uhndur thair wihthuh straw. N then maybe laydur that day, ur laydur that week, uh strawng wihnd pihks uhp n awl yur hard wurk layz down lik uh dawg ihn shayd.

Thats wuht thuh duhpreshuhn wuhz awl uhbout — nawt thuh stuhrihlihdee, nawt thuh pawvurdee, nawt thuh wihnd. Ihwuhz thuh kawnstihnt wairihn awn yuh, thuh feelihn that evree time Gawd put down suhmuchazuh pennee ihn yur path hee wuhz onlee dewihn iht so wen yuh bent ovur hee kd start kihkihn yuh ihn thuh ars. An yuh new sents hee wuhz Gawd ihz layg wuhzn evur guhnuh tir out. Wee had tuh dew wuht wee kd ihn thoz yeerz tuh litihn thihngz uhp. No wuhn had uhnuhf muhnee tuh dew enuhthihn tew grand, mind yuh, buht eevihn gathrihn tuhgethur ihnuh dans hawl, brihngihn wihth yuh wuht food yuh kd, ur

nuhnuhdawl, ihf yuh had nuhthihn tuh spair, that helpt suhm. Maybee iht wuhz juhs noihn yuh wurihnt uhlon, that Gawd wuhzn pihkihn awn juhs yew.

Enuhwayz, tuh get bak tuhthuh storee I wuhz triihn tuh tel – I met thuh wumihn hew buhkaym muh wif ihn ninteentweneesevihn. Ya, uhfihsuhlee that ihdn thuh durdee thurdeez yet, buht tweneeseven wuhz az baduh yeer az enee that fawlod. That yeer wuhz tairihbuhl. Sep fur that wuhn nit. That nit wuhz majihk. I kant klaym tuh ruhmembur awl thuh duhtayulz. Ihn tweneesevihn I wooduh bihn awluh tweneewuhn, an thihn azuh starvd kat. Ihwuhz suhmur, I ruhmembur that, n fruhm thuh heet an thuh way thuh air seemd sortuh flat Id ges ihwuhz Jewn. Im nawt ihntiurlee shur wuht thuh town wuhz — I onlee wurkt that wuhn suhmr ihn thuh aireeyuh, buhfor thuh threshihn krew mewvd furthur south uhgen, bak neer wair I wuhz born. Whudevur iht wuhz, I kant ruhmembur . . . I duhno. Duhdnt matr. Ihwuz wuhnuh thoz smawl townz, thuh kind that drid uhp an blew uhway ihn thuh duhpreshuhn. I bediht dont eevihn ihgzihst enuhmor.

Thay held thuh dans ihn thuh church, wihch wuhdn akchuhlee ihn thuh town. Ihwuhz sedawf bi ihtself, neerleeuh ful miul out. Id nevr bihn ihn that church buhfor, an onlee ihtuh town wuhns, maybee twis. I prihdee muhch kep tuh thuh farmz. Wuhzn thuh soshuhl sort. Wen thuh dans kaym rown thuh krew wuhz wurkihn furuh man naymuh omalee ur okawnuhlee ur suhmthihn lik that. Hee haduh sekshuhn out that way.

Thuh foks fruhm town dihdud good jawbuh deechurchihn thuh plays — thuh pewz wur awl shuhvd out tuh thuh wawlz, an thuh pulpiht haduh bihg bowuluh puhneh awniht. Awl thuh boyz fruhm thuh farm wenihn tuhgethur, an wee uhrivd weniht wuhz stihl lit — duhsk wuhz stihl an owur urso uhway wen wee awl gawt thair, an thuh plays wuhz awlredee pakt, hawtn swedee, n smelihnuh that gawdawful tuhbako evreewuhn smokt bak then.

I ruhmembur wawkihn ihn wiht Sihsee Muhgiht — reeul naym wuhz Bihl, buht thair wur three uhthur Bihlz awn ar krew, so wee haduh find uhthur naymz furihm awl. Sihsee gawt hihz kuhzee wuhz awlwayz kuhmplaynihn. Reeyul smawl bawdeed, ihgsep furihz mouth. Wuhnuh thoz giz yuh kd prawblee juhs push ovur anee mit nawt geduhp. Sihsee haydihd thuh naym, uhkors, buht wee dihdnt kair uh hol heluhvuhlawt ihf iht sewdihd hihm urnawt. Nobuhdee muhch liktihm — haduh pursuhnalihdee likuh kawnstuhpaydihd kow. Buht hee also haduh flaskuh wihskee ihnihz hihp pawkiht that nit, anuh few nihpsuh that mayd ihm seem moslee awlrit.

Awn thuh way ihn awl wee kd tawk uhhout wuhz awl thuh gurlz wee wur guhnuh lay buhdiht muhstuh bihn morihn an ovr buhfor eneeuh uhs seduh wurd tuh eneewuhn outsid thuh grewp wee kuhm wiht. Wee wur awl fuluh ourselvz wen iht wuhz juhs uhs giz buhdI thihnk wee awl felt ouduh plays wuns wee gawt thair an saw awl thuh gurlz. Wee wur awl farmhanz, an thats nevr bihnuh pruhfeshuhn tuh get rihch ihn. Wee kaym ihn ar bes kloz. That juhs ment thuh set thatuhd bihn washt that week ihnsteduh thuh wuhn wee wurkt ihn. Ihf thuh dansihd bihnuh week laydr, wee wooduh awl kuhm wairihn ar uhthur shurts. I don spoz eneewun els rihlee notihst, buhdihf thay dihd thay wooduh uhnurstood. Buht thair wur men fruhm town thair ihn sewts n tiz, an wihihn ihn dresihz that wurihnt thuh saym fabrihk az thuh kurtihnz huhng uhp ihn thur kihchihn wihtduhz, so wee felt lik weed kuhm ihn fruhm thuh mewn. Felt lik thuh hol krowd wuhz stairihn aduhs — maybee thats wi wee awl drankaz muhchuhz wee dihd.

Lookihn bak awniht, thair kdntuh bihn morihn tew huhnurd peepl thair — kdn fiht morihn that ihn thuh church. Stihl, aftur spendihn so muhch tim out awn thuh farm, cuhmihn ihn an seeihn that mencee peepul awl at wuhns iht took uh bihduh getn yewstew. An evree

man thair hadihz i awnuh tawl blawnd gurl ihnuh pihnk flowurd dres. Shee had tew lawng braidz buhhind hur bak. Tuh tel yuh thuh trewth wen shee had that siduh hur turnd tew uhs wee hardlee evur lookt uhp az hi azur hair. Shee had thuh kurvee kinduh bawdee yuh kant help buht stair at, speshlee wen yuh aynt seen nuhthihn buht farmhanz an thuh reer enduh horsihz furuh kuhpuluh muhns.

Shee wuhdn mi wif, tho. Mi wif wuhz thuh gurl buhsid thuh prihdee wuhn.

I spoz that sownz awful, buhdIm nawt sayihn Lihleeuhn wuhdn byewduhful hurselt. Lik I say, thuh blawnd wuhz tawlan at furst tayk shee lookt lik shee buhlawngd awn thuh skreenuhvuh nihkulodeeuhn suhmwair — shee seemd mor lik suhm laws anjuhluhs starliht thenuh farm gurl. Thuh yuhng thihng buhsidur wuhz mor kyewt then prihdee — shee wuhz thihn n shayplihs. Brests woodihnuh fihld teekuhps, anur brown hair wuhz juhs tid bak lik shee dihdn gihv uh dam uhboudiht. Shee wuhdn nuhthihn kuhmpaird wiht that blawnd ihn suhm wayz, I spoz, buht thuh blawnd had krookiht teeth anuh bihg noz, tew, wenyuh lookt. Thuh brewnet haduh rown fays uh purfihkt azuh porsuhlihn dawl. Hur fays hadn bihn beetihn ihntuh lehthur bi thuh suhn, neethur. Yuh kduh puld thuh blawndz fays awf an playd furs bays wihtihht.

Wee — thuh grewpuh farmhanz — an hur grewpuh yuhng laydeez, staird uhkraws thuh room dam neer furevur. Thair wur moruh uhs then them an laydur, aftur wee wur druhnkur, uh kuhpuluh thuh guyz gawdihntuh skuhfulz that wooduh turnd ihntuh fihsfits ihf wee hadntuh brokihnihm uhp kwihk. Buhdat furst, buhfor weed bihn drihnkihn fur uhwiul, wee wur tew nurvuhs tuh go ovur. Ar durdee fihngnrayyulz an kuhduhp hanz wur fin ihn thuh feeyuldz buht aduh dans? Thuh wihmihn wood notihs fur shur.

I onlee went ovur tuh muh wif tuh get bewz. Wuhz kuhz Sihsee dihdn hav thuh guhts tuh dew thihngz fur hihself. Heed bihn standihn thair, blowihn ihz bad breth out ovur them burnt pawpkorn kurnuhl teethuh hihz, an stairihn at thuh blawnd fur prawblee uh haf ovr buhfor hee ast meeduh go uhp tuh Lihleeyuhn an ihntruhdews muhself, an then ihntruhdews hihm tuh thuh blawnd. Awl hee needihd, hee sed, wuhz fur meeduh opihn thuh dor, an heed dew thuh rest. Now I had muh i awn thuh blawnd muhself, so I argewd furuh biht ovur hew shd gedur n hew shd get thuh uhthurwuhn. Eevenchuhlee I gayv uhp, kuhz thairz no argewihn wihth guyz lik Sihsee. At furs thay pleed, then thay win, then thay triduh fit. An thay awlwayz fit durdee. I gawt tiyurduh hihz winihn buhfor hee kd get stardiht throwihn puhnchihtz n uhgreed, buhdonlee awn thuh kuhndihshuhn that I gawt tuh down thuh las few mouthfulz fruhmihz flask. Hee uhgreed tuh that kwihk eenuhf. Hee wuhz dam neer buhblihn ovur bi then. Uhkorse stihl took uhnuhthur swihg buhfor hee handihd iht ovur. Thairzuh reezuhn thay kawl iht lihkwihd kurihj, anthuh las few swawloz liht mee uhp ihnsid brit az day. Buhsidz, muh wif rihlee wuhz kyewt then, speshlee wuhns wee gawt klos uhnuhf tuh seeur skihn. Wuhz purfihkt. Wihsh yew kduh seenr that day — ihts how Il awlwayz ruhmemburur.

Kuhnsihdrihn how bad muh mouth muhstuh smeld wihth that ri, I spoze Im luhkee shee tawkt tuh mee adawl. Aftur I intruhdewst Sihsee, an aftur hee swadihd mee awn thuh arm fur ihntruhdewsihn hihm bi ihz nihknaym, I dihdn kair wuht hapihnd tewihm, an I dihd mi bes tuh lewzihm ihn thuh krowd. Eevenchuhlee I dihd, thank gawd, ur I thihnk I wooduh beet thuh pihs ouduhihm. Hee wuhz triihn tuh bihld hihmself uhp ihn fruhnuh thuh blawnd, an hihz wayuh dewihn that wuhz tuh kuht mee down az much azee kd. Me an Lihleeyuhnud hihdiht awf an awl I wawnuhd tuh dew wuhz get rihduh hihm an get tuh

nour. I nevur gawt tuh see howee gawduhlawng wihthur. Im shur thuh blawnd had uhnuhf sens tuh sendihm pakihn straydawf. Wen wee ran ihtuh eech uhthur uh kuhpuluh owurz laydur hee tol mee heed bihn outsid wihthur ihn thuh bushihz, buhduhkors thawuhz nawnsens. Zihf eneewuhn kd dew eneethihng wihth eneewuhn out ihn thuh opihn that nit. Azihf thur wur enee bushihz tuh dew enee dewihn, eethur. Mee an Lihleeyuhn past tim shoutihn ovur thuh band. Ihwuhz tew lowd, speshlee thuh hornz – uh trawmbon, uh truhmpiht, anuh blak feluh awnuh saksuhfon. Thair wuhzuh peeyanuh, tew. At wun poynt I no thur wuhzuh fihdl buhdiht dihdn play awl thuh tim — I thihnk thuh gi playihn iht wuhz seeihn wuhnuthuh gurlz thair an kep stawpihn soee kd dans wihthur.

Wuhns I gawt klos uhnuhf tuh Lihleeyuhn tuh see ur iz, I wuhzuh gawnur. Iv nevur fawlihn lik that, buhfor ur sihns. An fawlin ihzuh good wurd furiht tew, kuhz ihwuhz lik I juhs kep swihmihn ihtuh thuh pewulz uhvur iz, deepur n deepur n deepur n feelihn lik I kd nevur get klos tuh thuh bawduhm.

Thuh nit wor awn, an ihts awl uh blur uh dansihn an mewzihk an tawkihn an drihnikhn an lafihn. Wuhn kleeer memree stihks out ihn muh mind, lik thuh last stuhmp left ihnuh feeyuld. Me an Lihleeyuhn wur sihtihn rownduh taybul wihthuh buhnhuh foks fruhm town shee didn seem tuh no enee bedurihn I dihd. Wuhnuth thuh towneez brawt ouduh bawdul an wuhz pasihn iht uhrown. Aftur I took mi turn I past iht ovur tewur, ihgspektihn hur tuh pas iht awntuh thuh gi sihtihn awn thuh far siduh hur. Shee dihd, buht damd ihf shee dihdn taykuh swihg furs, an prawblee bihgurihn thuh wuhn Id juhs swawlod. An that wuhz wihskee tew, homayd an strawng uhnuhf tuh staguruh hors. N bak then uh wumihn drihnikhn ihn puhblihk, wel iht wuhdnt uhnuhf tuh beeuh skanduhl, buhdiht wuhdnt far awf, speshlee ihnuh plys wihth so menee menuhnits uhrown. Nuhthihn uhgihnstihm uhkors, ihts

juhs that thay don tawlurayt drihnkihn thuh way wee dew. Buht bak then, I don thihnk Id evur seenuh gurl drihnk strayt ouduh thuh bawdul lik that. Shee hadn eevihn wipt awf thuh nek, lik yewd fihgur uh gurl wood. Iht suhprizd mee uh biht, an I ges shee kd see iht ihn muh iz, kuhz furuh sekihn shee froz lik yuh dew wen yuh get kawt pihnnchin thuh las peesuh pi. Then shee juhs handihd thuh bawdul awn, an awl thuh wil Im stairihn adur ston duhm, an thenur iz twihnkuld, an awluhvuh suhdihn shee stardiht lafihn. Stihl lafihn, shee leend ovur an gihmee uh kihs — an that wuhz suhmthihn wihmihn defihnihtlee dihdn dew. Leest ihn puhblihk.

Wee spentuh lawduh tim out awn thuh dans flor, swetihn an nawt kairihn that wee wur, shairihn sihguhrets, eevihn tho shee awveeyuhslee dihdn smok muhch. Shee nevur rihlee dihd duhveluhp thuh habiht.

I don no wuht timuh nit, ur mornihn, iht wuhz wen peepul duhsidiht thay shd bee leevihn — ur maybee ihwuhz juhs tew men taykihn iht outsid. Wuhdevur iht wuhz, suhm ihdeeiht opihnd thuh dor. I bediht wuhz tew kihdz triihn tuh sneek awf uhway fruhm thur pairihnts, thuh gurl thihnkihn thay wur goihn out tuh tawk urduh kewul awf an thuh boy hopihn tuh get uhndurur skurt. Ihf so, hee dihdn ihgzakly maykuh smooth egziht.

Thay kaym lik thayd bihn thair waytihn awl nit. Uhntihl then thuh muzihkuhd kuhvurd uhp thuh sown buht wuhns that dor gawt opihnd uhp ihwuhdnt lawng buhfor thuh band janguld tewuh stawp. Thur muhstuh bihnuh huhnurd thowzihn buhgz fur evree pursuhn ihn thuh church. Thuh bugz kaym ihn thru thuh dor so thihk yuh kdn kloz iht. Thuh grashawpurz wur ihnuh frenzee that yeer — thur nuhmburz took awf, an wihth thuh lakuh fewd thay wur starvihn. Wen thuh dor opihnd, thay juhmt awn thuh bufay taybul lik ants

awnuh kyewbuh shuhgur. Wihth how menee uhvuhm thair wur, thuh food juhs uhvapurhaydihd, onlee thay wurihnt duhn eetihn yet.

Wen thay kaym ihn wee dihd ar damdihst tuh cleer out, buht fur uhwiul iht seemd lik wee wur juhs guhnuh get nawkt down an swormd ovur – eethur bi peepul panihkihn tuh gedout ur bi thuh jumpurz skreechihn tuh gedihn. I aynt nevur seen eneethihng els lik iht. I don no wuht tuh say tuh tel yuh wuhdiht wuhz lik. I spoz ihnuh way ihwuhz likuh reeul bihg raynstorm — thuh kinduh klowdburst wee dihdn rihlee get furuh deokayd ur mor. Ihwuhz mor lik beeihn peltihd then beeyihn swormd — lik beeihn out ihnuh hevee thuhndurstorm juhs buhfor iht turnz tuh hayul, sep theez bihg rayndrawps huhng awn an klimd uhrown awn yuh. An thuh sownd – thawuhz suhmthihn els. Yuh kant buhgihn tuh thihnk wuhdiht wuhz lik. Thay wuhz awl skreechihn lik mad – yuhno how ihn skewul thair wuhz awlwayz that wuhn kihd hewd ruhnihz fihngurnayulz down thuh chawkbord juhs soz heed brihng uhp thuh hair awn thuh bakuh yur nek? Thawuhz wuhdiht wuhz lik.

Ihts hard tuh say how lawng iht lastihd. Fur uhwiul iht wuhdnt eevihn sayf tuh mewv – thay wur kuhmihn ihn suh fast yuh kdn rihlee see wair yuh wur goihn an peepuhl wur ruhnihn evree wihch way, nawkihn wuhnuhnuhthur tuh thuh flor. Lihleeyuhn, shee wawnuhd tuh ruhn tew, buhd I grabdur han an swuhngur bak tuhword mee. I puldur ihn klos thuh way weed bihn dansihn awn thuh slo wuhnz an raptmuh armz tit uhrownur so nuhthihn kd wurm ihts way downur fruhnt. Shee tuhkt hur hed uhp uhndur mi chihn so thay kdn get awnur fays, an awl I kd dew wuhz stan thair an skweez muh iz shuht. Thay krawld arown awl ovur mee, an iht wuhz awl I kd dew tuh keep fruhm bruhshihn them awf mee, buhdI needihd tuh keep muh armz wair thay wur so sheed bee okay. Wee stood thair az stihl az wee kd, an iht seemd lik thuh hol wurld wuhz krawlihn.

Bad az iht wuhz tuh feeul thur laygz mewvihn awn yur bair skihn, thuh noyz thay mayd wuhz wurs. Way, way wurs. Yew kd bairlee thihnk, ihwuhz so lowd — thay wooduh drown out thuh band, ihf ihduh kep playihn. Wuhz lik lihsnihn tewuh thowzihn skreemihn baybeez awl piyuld awn tawpuh wuhnunuhthur. Ihts so eezeeduh ruhmembur that sownd, eevihn tho iht hapihnd so mencee yeerz uhgo.

So wee stood thair, an aftur uhwiul iht seemd lik thay seduld down uhbiht. Thair wur stihl az mencee uhvihn az evur, buht thay wurnt az riuld uhp. Thats wen wee stardiht mewvihn. Lihleeyuhn kepur iz shuht an I todur uhlawng, dewihn muh best tuh see threw thuh hawpurz. An that wuhdn eeze, kuhz thay wur thihk azuh thurd koduh paynt. Neer thuh dor thur wuhzuh man wihtuh hat ihnihz han, wayvihn iht ihn fruhnuh hihz fays tuh keep thuh buhgz awf. Iht wuhz wurkihn mor likuh skewp thenuh fan — hee muhstuh haduh pownduh thuh dam thihngz trapt, an kep flaylihn uhway. I puld Lihleeyuhn uhrown ihm — wee gayv ihmuh wid burth, buhdee stihl manihjd suhmhow tuh gihv uruh good smak awn thuh bakuhvur sholdur. Muhstuh leftuh heluhvuh brewz. Shee krihnjduhbiht buht dihdn kri out tho — klozd iz an awl, shee took iht ihn strid. Aftur that wee both prihdee muhch pudar hedz down an mayd wuhn mor hedlawng ruhsh. That put us outsid.

Wee kd breeth wuhns wee hiht thuh opihn air — dihdn reeyuhliz wee hadn bihn tihl I stardiht uhp uhgen. Kdn breeth ihn thair, wiht them. Yur iz wur shuht so tit yur noz wuhz klozd uhp, an ihf yuh opihnd yur lihps eevihn partway thayd bee ihn yur mouth, pihkihn yur teeth kleen kwihkurihn yew kd spiht. Wee wur both breethihn hard, nawt so muhch fruhm holdihn iht fur so lawng, mor fruhm thuh ihgsitmihnt then enuhthihn.

Iht seemd bedur outsid — thuh noyz wuhdn so bad, an thur dihdn seem tuh bee az mencee uhvihn, buht thats juhs kuhz thay wurihnt bawduld uhp. Yuh kdn see em, eethur.

Uhv awl thihngz ihtuhd pihkt that week tuh rayn, an ihduh bihn stormihnn awfanawn fur dayz, an that nit thuh klowdz wur hevee, so yuh onlee okayzhunuhlee saw uh star eruh pees uh thuh moon wair thay brok uhp uh biht. Eevihn out thair wee dihdn triduh tawk — thair wur stihl bihlyuhnzh uhvem out thair, awl churpihn. Thuh sown wuhz tew hipihcht tuh bee uh ror, buht thats wuht I wawnuh kawl iht. “Wur” dont seemtuh beeyuh lowd uhnuhf wurd. Outsids, thuh lit kuhmihn fruhm thuh dorway wuhz juhs uhnuhf tuh see thuh stoop an thuh three steps tuh thuh grown. Furthr then that aniht wuhzaz blak azuh kroz ars out thair. Ihnuh way, Iv awlwayz bihn glad foriht, kuhz I woodihntuh wawnuhd tuh bee aybul tuh see awl them buhgz dewihn wuht thay dihd.

Awl wee dihd, Lihleeyuhn an mee, wuhz look furuh plays tuh hid. Wee wurihnt thuh onlee wuhnzh. Awl ovur thuh plays peepl wur ruhnihn evree wihch way. Thair wur boyz an gurlz, an muhthrz wihth thur baybeez held suh tit yuh wuhndurd ihf thur bonz wur getihn kruhsht. Uh few men, tew. Yuh juhs panihk wen thihngz lik that hapihn. Yuh kant ihgspekt that kinduh thihng. Kant, yuhno, pruhpair yur reyakhshuhn tewiht.

Wee gawt awf thuh steps, hadtew kuhz peepl wur startihn tuh fawlo us, anuh bihg burlee feluh slamd ihtuh uhs, al buht nawkihn uhs awf thuh stoop. Suhmhow wee kep arselvz uhp. Hee wen awf ihtuh thuh dark bi hihs self. I no hee haduh wif an kihdz — I sawihm thair wihthihm buhfor — buhdee took awf ruhnihn likuh tawmktat wihth ihts tayul awn fiur, traylihnuh strihnguh kuhswurdz ihn suhm langwihjuh hihz. Hee wuhzuh slav, eruh polak, r suhmthihn. Huh! Prawblee ran bak hom kleeer ovur thuh oshuhn, thuh way hee wuhz ruhnihn.

Kors yuh kdn blaymihm — ihf I thawt Lihleeyuhn wuhz slowihn mee down Iduh prawblee lef hur buhhind tew. Dihchtur rit then an thair. Sep thadaynt thuh way iht wurkt.

Ihf eethur uhvuhs wooduh thawduh ruhnihn Im shur wee wooduh gawt splihduhpart, buht wen I turnd tuhward thuh ro uh wagihnz shee seemd tuh kech awn, an akchuhlee led thuh way bi uh step. Hel, maybe shee turnd furst, an I kawdawntuh hur ideeuh. Hew noz? Nawt lawng aftur wee gawt outsid, suhmwuhn ihnsid finlee manihjd tuh kloz thuh dor tho, so awluhvuhs that wur outsid wur stuhk tihl thay duhsidih tuh opihn bak uhp.

Wee both new wuht wee wur lookihn for — weerd how wee nevur hadtuh tawk iht ovr. I took thuh rit. Shee took evreethihng parkt awn thuh lef. Shee fownd iht, uhkors. Wihmihn ar bedur at that tipuh thihng. Shee kd awlwayz find thuh kechuhp ihn thuh frihj aftur Id sworn uhp an down wee wur ouduhviht, tew.

Ihwuhzuh smal wagihn, uh tew seedr, bench ihn fruhnt an maybe uh for foot lawng boks wihth shalo sids. Thair wuhzuh blankiht ihnsid — awl wee needihd. I helptur ihn, nawt that shee needihd iht, juhs kuhziht seemd thuh rit thihng tuh dew. I hawpt ihn muhself, n fand thuh blankiht ovurur, thuh hol tim feelihn thuh grashawpurz land ihn muh hair, downihn muh shurt kawlr, an eevihn down thuh bakuh mi slaks. Uhnderneeth, Lihleeyuhn pihnd thuh blankiht tuh wun kornur wair thay wur kreepihn ihn. Shee held that wuhn thair wihthuh hand antuhthuh uhthur kornur wihth thuh to uh hur shew. I lay down buhsidur, maykihn shur I gawt down az kwihk az I kd, hopihn that ihf I wuhz kwihk uhbout sedlihn ihn nawt tew menea hawpurz wood fawlo mee ihn. Lik I sed, thuh wagihn wuhz prihdee short, so yuh hadtuh lay down wihth yur neez drawn uhp hi. Awn tawpuh that wee eech hadar hanz prest tuh thuh tawp kornur an ar toz ihn thuh bawduhm kornur tuh hold thuh blankiht ovur uhs lik uh sheeyuld.

Wurkt likuh dam, eevihn wihth thuh kuhpul holz that let thuh awd hawpur ihn. Kors I spoz ihf eethuruh uhs had rihlee bihn thihnkihn weeduh gawt ihntuh wuhnuh thuh

cairuhjihz er even wuhnuthuh tewer three karz thawur puld uhp, buht neethr wuhnuh uhs thawduhviht. That wooduh seemd lik tew bihg an ihtrewzhuhn — lik braykihn uh wihtduh tuh get ihtuh yur frenz hous ihnsteduh wawkin ihn wen thuh door aynt lawkt. I ruhmembur wuhnuh thuh karz thair wuhz blood red — an ihf I had enee thawts uh climihn ihnuh kar I shur dihdn aftur seeihn that fuhkihn thihng.

Yewd think that wooduh bihn thuh ideeul wayduh meet yur wif, ay — pasihnuh nit outdorz uhnduruh blankiht. Buht wee kdn eevihn look at eechuhthur — wur both kurld uhp, baktuhbak. Reerend tuh reerend, rihlee. Wee tawktuh biht, buht nawt muhch kuhz wee eech had an arm uhbuw ar hed so eneethihng wee sed endihd uhp no furthur then ar on armpiht.

Ihwuhz ihgzawstihng — kdn rihlee sleep, kuhz wuhns yuh dihd yur arm wood drawp uryur foot wood mewv an them dam buhgz wood get ihtuh pestur yuh. Hard az hel tuh kihlihm, tew, wuhns thay wur ihn, sens yuh kdn mewv haf yur bawdee wihtout shihftihn thuh hol blankiht an maykihn thuh prawbluhm wurs.

Thuh buhgz mewvd awn suhmtim buhfor dawn — wee kd heerihm go, heer thur sown drawp uhway lik wayvz awnuh beech wen yur wawkihn uhway fruhm iht. Kors iht nevr gawt cuhmpleetlee kwiiht, nawt rihlee — thair wur stihl hawpurz awl ovur thuh plays, buht thayd kuht down suhm. Nawt tuh normuhl yet, an thur wuhz stihl thihs kinduh uhlektrihk pur twis az loud az that bakgrown noyz yuh awlwayz get ihn thuh suhmur. Thay wur stihl eetihn evruhthihng ihn sit, tew, buhdiht wuhz thuh tayul enduh them, thuh ejuh thuh klowd, an iht eevenchuhlee past awn. Thawuhz wen wee new wee kd mewv uhbiht, juhs az thuh ejuh thuh klowd past uhs bi.

Wee wacht thuh ski turnihn tuh blew threw suhmuhthuh holz ihn thuh blankiht. I ruhmembur sihtihn klos, sholdur duh sholdur, wawchihn aziht went fruhm blak tuh stihl

beeyihn dark buht wihth uhnuhf lit ihniht that thuh nit dihdn seem so hevee, that wee wur threw that dam nit an that day wuhz kuhmihn. Wee turnd tuhgethur then - dont ruhmembur hew led thuh way thair, eethur, buht wee met ihn thuh mihdl. Then, finlee, wee wur aybul tuh get tuhgethur buhneeth thuh blankiht thuh way weed wawnihd tew awl nit.

Wee dihdn notihs tihl laydur how muhch damihj had bihn duhn. Thoz grashawpurz wur suhmthihn els. Nevur sawihm lik that uhgen. Thay kaym threw that nit an et evreethihn thay kd chew. Thuh feeyuldz wur layd tuh duhst fur milz uhrown, thuh gardihnz ihn town wur pihkt kuhmpleetlee kleen. Thay eevihn ayt thuh gras. Furuh miul uhrown thuh grown wuhz blak az durt, kuhz thats awl thawuhz left. I ruhmembur bihg klowdz uhviht kihkihn uhp laydur ihn thuh day. Wihthout thuh gras tuh hold iht down, iht juhs pihkt uhp an mewvd awn. Almost thihnk ihwuhz thuh grashawpurz that brawt ihn thuh duhpreshuhn, nawt thuh wethr, or thuh uhkawnuhmee.

Iv stihl gawt thuh blankiht — Lihleeyuhn kep iht, wawkt hom wihth iht rapt uhrownur sholdurz that nit, an kepiht ihnuh truhnk at thuh fooduh ar bed tihl thuh day shee did.

Wen thuh kihdz kuhm out tuh help mee kleen uhp thuh plays aftur shee past, I haduh heluhvuh tim kuhnvihnsihnihm tuh let mee keep iht. Tuh them iht wuhz juhst uhn old hors blankiht, uh biht muhstee, an fuluh mawth holz. Wuhn bihg wuhn ihn thuh mihdul, uhspeshuhlee. How kd I ihgsplayn tuh mi khidz that ihf thuh fabrihk wuhz wet then ihwuhz sawft uhnuhf that thuh hawpurz kd eet adiht, so thayd sat awn muh bak, thuh wuhnz that stuk uhrown, an had luhneh wen wee — wen I wuhz wurkihn uhp swet?

Evenchuhlee I juhs put muh foot down, an toldihm I wuhz keepihn iht. Dihdn triduh ihgsplayn tuh them. Suhm thihngz yuh kant — ledihm thihnk Im seeniul. I don mind.

haymaykur

Uhm thuh first wuhn tuh uhdmiht uhm nawt guhnuh go downihn hihstree az wuhnuh thuh grayts. I wuhz awlridI ges, buht nuhtihn speshuhl. Wuhn morihn I lawst. Hard tuh gihvyuh nuhmburz. Thur wuruh hol buhnchuh “prizfits” I ges yuhd kawlihm, wihth uh rihng an rops, an kawnraks, an dawkturz an awl that. An I dihd awlrit ihn thoz, buhd I muhstuh had ten timz that menea fits that don show uhp awn enee uhfihsul rekurd. Hew wuhz iht sed yew kd kown awn tew thihngz – deth an takzihz? Wel hewevur iht wuhz dihdnt liv ihn thihs sihdee bak then. Wuhdn muhnee tuh pay yur takzihz, an yuh kdn di, kuhz nowuhn kd uhford tuh bairee yuh. Yew kd buhsyur bawlz twelvursihksteen owurzu day an mayk uh buhk. N I meen that lihduruhlee. Sihksteen owurzu meeneeyul wurk wood nechuh uh sihngul dawlur. An yuh took iht, kuhz thur wuhz awlwayz suhmwuhn uhrown hewd dew iht fur nindee sents, ur sevhneefiv. Wuhdn uhnuhf tuh feedyur kihdz awlwayz, sep maybee wuhnsuhday.

Buht yuh kd awlwayz kown awn sihngul men tuh find thuh muhnee fur three thihngz. Wee yewstuh kawlem thuh three beez. Burdz, bewz, an bawksihn. Yewzhuhlee sihguhrets tew buht them furs three wurthuh staypulzu lif. Now bak then uh man kd get hihself uh hewur fur uh dawlur. Duhzn sown lik muhch, buht that kd bee uh hol dayz wayj ur mor. Anihfyuh thawt yew wuruh biht tew ruhspektuhbul fur that, anihfyuh had suhm bred

tuh flash, yuh had no truhbul findihnuh dayt. Yur hed kduh bihn skrewd awn bakwurdz, an yuh kduh had three armz, buhdazlawng az yuh had paypur muhnee yew kd tayk yur pihk. Ihf yuh had ten dawulrz tuhyur naym, Mihs Uhmairihkuh hurselw wooduh kuhm ruhnihn. Maybee ihn uhthur dayz iht wooduh bihn dihfurnt buht morulz tookuh bihduhvuh slid fur uhwiul. Lawduh gurlz fihgurd ihf thay kd maybee geduh meeul fur themselvz, ur maybee uh bihduh muhnee fur thur famleez thayd dew wuhdevur iht took. Wuhzihn prawstihtewshuhn, nawt kwit, buht klos. Anuh lawduh feluhz took uhdvanihjuh that. Lawduh feluhz took uhdvanihjuh eneewun thay kd.

N ihf wihmihn wurnt wuhchuh wur aftur, yew kd geduh fordee ownsuruh ri fur juhs ovur tew dawlurz. Yew kd find cheepur stuhf ihf yuh lookt. Mayd fruhm puhdayduhz yewzhulee, buhdI seen peepul drihnkihn wood alkuhhawl fur krisayk. That stuhf wood peelyur taysbuhdz awf an meltyur nozhair juhs tuh smel iht.

Buht bawksihn wuhz thuh cheepihstuh awl three. Uh wumihnz cuhmpnee uhd nevrur kawstyuh lesihn for bihts, an uh bawdul uh dawlur at leest, ihfyuh dihdn wawnuh go blind. Buhdihf yuh kd find uhn uhleegul fit, thaduhd kawst at mostuh dim uruh nihkul tuh gedihn, ihf iht wuhdn free. An chansihz wur yuh kd fin suhmwuhn pasihn rownuh bawdul, an uhkors wihmihn huhng rown fits kuhz chansihz wur suhmwuhn wood get luhkee wihth thur bet an wind uhp wihth uh wawdtuh blo. Wuhz sorduh thuh plays tuh bee, fur yuhng men lookihn fur uh good tim.

N muhnee wuhz tit – reeul tit – so uhlawduh timz nowuhn wawnuhd tuh pay thuh lisihnsihn fee fur thuh fit, ur hav tuh get thuh fidur kleerd biuh dawktur kuhz thaduhd kawstyuh tew. An thuh fidurz wood tayk thuh fits eevihn ifh thay wurnt az leeguhl ur az sayf az thay mit normuhlee uh likt, kuhz iht ment suhm ekstruh muhnee. N thuh awdeeyuhns

gawt tuh see uh fit wair thay dihdn havtuh pay muhch fur admihshuhn, an uhkors yew kd bet at thuh smokur fits, wair wihth lisihnst fits ihwuhz uhfihsuhlee uhleegul. Wurkt out fur evreewuhn, lesuh kawp kaym tuh buhsdiht uhp. Then chansihz wur yuh dihdn seeuh nihkuhl – fidurz dihdn get payd, an awl bets gawt taykihn. Iv hurduh guyz hew wurkt ihdout wihth thuh kawps so thay new wair an wen tuh sho uhp – then thay tookuh shairuh thuh kash fruhm thuh gi hewd sedihdawl uhp. Buht mostuh thuh tim yuh mayd uh kuhpuluh buhks fruhmiht.

Wuruh lawduh giz bak then that wood fit fur uh meeul, awl buht kihlihn suhmwuhn furuh sanwihch. I wuhz nevir that despriht muhself, thank Gawd. I at leest haduh plays tuh kawl hom, anuh jawb mos timz. Wuhdn muhchuhvuh jawb, an lik evreethihn els thuh pay wuhz hardlee wurth getihn ouduh bed for, buhdI held awntuh iht furawl I wuhz wurth. An fitihn wuhz uhway tuh brihng ihn uh biht ekstruh. Wee lihvd uhp neer thuh see pee ar yard. Nawt thuh bes nayburhood, nevir haz bihn, buhdiht wurkt out wel kuhz ihf uh fidur evur rod ihntuh town I wuhz eezee tuh trak down.

Wuhz hard tuh pruhpair fur thoz fits – wuhdn enee way tew, rihlee. Eneedayuh thuh week, enee timuh day, thayd kuhm. Wurd wood spred that thur wuhz guhnuh bee uh fit, so bi thuh tim I gawt tuh thuh yard, ur tuh thuh vaykihnt lawt, ur thuh baysmihnt, ur wairevir thayd set thuh fit uhp, thurd bee eneewair fruhm twenee tew uh huhnurd peepul waytihn awn mee. Kors mos timz Id uh nevir seen thuh gi buhfor, n hav no ideeyuh howduh fidihm. Yewzhuhlee thur wuhz wuhn man hewd pay thuh fidurz an tayk thuh bets. I yewzhuhlee mayd uh few buhks tuh fit – suhmtimz fiv, wihch wuhz uhbout uh weeks wayjihz, buht Iv fawt fur az lihdul az tew an uhz muhchuhz twenee. Wihnur tayk awl, uhkors.

Mostuh thuh bets wur fivurten sens, suhmtimz juhstuh penec. I had suhm boyz bedaz muhch azuh sawbuhk awn mee, an awlwayz gawt skaird az heltuh lewz. Uh dawlur ur mor fur enecuwuhn hew kuhm tuh thoz fits wuhz uh bihg wayjur, so yuh wur ihn hawt wawdur ihfyuh lawst. Uhlawduh timz giz uhd bet thur las red sent awnyuh, so ihf yew tookiht awn thuh chihn, sod thay. Iv had feluhz kuhm aftur mee uh kuhpuluh timz. Had uh reeyul heluhvuh day wen that hapihnd. Gawt kayod ihn thuh rihng, an then az I wuhz leevihn uh haf duhzihn feluhz kawduhptuh mee an gaymee uh beetihn wurs then Id juhs took. Wuhz luhkee thay duhsidihd tuh lay awf aftur uhbiht, ur Iduh bihn dun ihn.

Lik I say, tho, yewzhuhlee I dihd awlrit. Buht thair wur suhm dam good fidurz ihn thuh aireeyuh bak then. Fred Tihlstuhn, hee wuhz litwayt champeeyuhnuh thuh wurld ihn ninteentweneesevuhn. Wuhz uh Briht buhfor hee kuhm ovur. Charlee Buhlawnjay, hee wuhz lit heveewayt champ rownduhbout then, maybeuh yeer ur tew awn eethur sid. Bawksihn wuhz thuh nahshnul sport then, nawt footbawl ur baysbawl ur eevihn hawkee. Thuh fidurz wee had then – Tuhnee uhn Demsee uhn Karpawncheeay uhn Korbiht an awluh them. Bawksihn wuhz uh reeyul sport bak then. Now thay gawt so mencee krookihd kuhmihshuhnz an pruhmodurz yuh kdn geduh strayt fit ihf yuh trid. An thawuhz buhfor teluhvihzhun – buhfor uhlawduh uhs had radeeoze ihn thuh hous eevihn.

Yuhno I ruhmembur thuh Karpawncheeay fit – thuh wuhn uhgihnst Demsee, uhkors. Wuhz thuh furs fit tuh mayk morihnuh mihlyuhn ihn tihkiht sayulz. Maybee thuh sekihn, buht Demsee wuhz ihn both uhvihm. I wen down tuh thuh Free Pres bihldihn – uhs giz yewzhulee dihd, kuhz thayd kawd out thuh rown ruhzuhts az thay kuhm out ovur thuh wiur. Thur muhstuh bihn uh kuhpuluh thowzuhnuh uhs thair fur that fit. Blawkt awf thuh street fur tew hol blawks – an evree few mihnihts thayd kuhm outihn yel thuh uhpdazy, lik “Demseez

presihn! Lookihn good! Hadihm awn thuh rops! Wuhn thuh rown!” ur wuhdevuruhd hapuhnd. Yewd heer thihs cheer goihn uhp threw thuh krowd az thuh newz maydihts way bak. Wee wur so ihntuh thuh fit iht wuhz lik wee kd see Demsee charjihh adihm wihth them hooksuh hihz thawood nawkuh mowntihn awnihts as. Wen Demsee kayodihm – muhstuh bihn uhhout tew mihnihts ihntuh thuh forth – Jeezuhz dihd wee cheer. Dansd ihn thuh streets, an peepul wur pasihn rown bewz an smoks an wuhdevur thay had. Wuhz lik weed awl bihn thair fur reeyul, wachihnihm put that frenchmuhn awn thuh kanvihs. Eevihn thuh giz thaduhd bedawn Karpawncheeay, anuh lawduhv ihm dihd, hopihn tuh mayk suhm bihg muhnee awn thuh awds, eevihn thoz giz wur hapeeduh see thuh mawlur wihn.

Dihdjuh no I gawt tuh fidihm? Demsee. Wuhz juhstuhn eksuhbihshuhn, anee wuhz wel pastihz prim, buhd awl thuh saym, hee wuhz stihl Jak Demsee. Ihwuhz aftur heed lawst tuh Tunee thuh sekihn tim, anee newee wuhdn guhnuevur get thuh tidul bak. Jakuhd mayd uhlawduh foks rihch an duhsidihd hee kd mayk uhbiht mor fur hihmsel, speshlee aftur hee lawst uh kuhpuluh mihlyuhn ihn thuh krashuh tweneenin. Bi then hee wuhz getihn ihntuh uh lawduh thihngz – onduh few puhbz an suhm hotelz – eevihn soldihz on branduh lihkur fur uhbiht. Jak Demsee Speshuhl Laybuhl wihskee. Buht Demsee wenout awn uh tewur uhkraws thuh stayts an stawpt ihn Kanuhduhuh few timz. Vankewvur, Wihnuhpeg an Muhnehreeawl, I thihnk. Maybee Tuhrawnueh. Nevur rihlee had uh reeyul mach thuh hol tim, sep fur Luhvihnskee.

Thay wur awlwayz wuhnur tew rowndurz uhgihnst tew ur three dihfurnt giz. I wooduh bihn ihgstatihk juhs tuh seeihm, tuh bi uh tihkiht an wawchihm lik evreewuhn els, kuhz uhkors Id nevr seenihm, sept ihn thuh paypur, an awn thuh newzreeulz thay shod buhfor mewveez. Wooduh did juhstuh seeihm, thuh way hee mewvd an duhhkt an charjd an

puhncht, eevihn fruhm thuh nozbleed sekshuhn. So wen thay tol mee I wuhz guhnuh fidihm – that miduh bihn thuh best momihnuh muh lif.

Thay pudiht awn at thuh amfihtheehdur, an sevihn thowzuhn peepul payd tuh gedihn. Thair wuhz uh good uhndurkard. Frankee Buhtagleeyuh haduh nis fit – hee wuhz an uhpankuhmur then. Dihdn eevihn mayk iht tuh thuh thurd rown, thawuhn.

Buht rihlee evreewuhn wuhz thairduh see Jak. Hee wuhz fitihn three uhvuhs that nit. Furst wuhz uh kihd naymd Angihs Mihkdawnuhld – an absuhlewt jiyuhnt, hee wuhz. Wuhz bihgurihn suhmuh thuh heveewayts tuhday – sihksanuh haf feet, eezee. Fihsts lik truhks. Thay akchuhlee kardihdihm ihn fruhm beesee fur thuh fit. Mi bihgiht dihsuhpoyntmihnt fruhm that nit ihz that I hadtuh stay ihn bak wil thay wuhz fitihn. I kd heer thuh krowd welkuhm thuh kihd, n thuh ror fur Demsee. Kd heer thuh ewzs an awz wenee hihdihm, buht uhthurihn that I dihdn no wuht wuhz goihn awn. I new Jakuhd go furihz bawdee tuh triduh brihngihz hed down, buht uhntihl I red thuh paypur thuh nekst day I dihdihn havuh klew wuht rihlee wen awn.

Thay huhsuld mee out so kwihk I dihdn hav tim tuh kech uh wurd fruhm Anguhs. Both thuh paypurz sed ihduhd playd out how I fihgurd. Jak beeduhp awnihz bawdee, an evree so awfihn heed triduh get tewihz chihn. Uhm shur ihf iht wooduh bihnuh lawngur fit Jak wooduh warnihm down, buhd awl thay had wuhz thuh wuhn rown, an yuh kant dew muhch ihn three mihnihts.

Buht thay wurnt juhs dawganponee shoz, dont get mee rawng. Iht wuhzuhn juhs jabzanluhv taps, ur huhgihn an grabihn. Thuh fanz kuhm tuh see Demsee fit, anee dihd. Suhmuh theez fits yuh get now, yuh don evur see uh reeyul puhnch landihd, buht Demsee akchuhlee nawkt uhfew feluhz out ihn thoz wuhn rowndurz. Hee fawt three fits ihn

Aruhzonuh awl ihn thuh saym nit nawt three weeks buhfor hee fawduhs, an he nawkt out awl three feluhz ihn thuh furst rown. Hee wuhz wuhnuh thoz giz hew juhs don no howduh tayk iht eezee. Yewzhuhlee wuhdee dihd wuhz fit tew wuhnrowndurz uhgenst prihdee eezee kawmpuhtihshuhn. Yewzhuhlee thawuhz uh yuhng kihd lik Anguhs anuh oldur lokuhl gi withuh naym evreewuhn ihn thuh awdeeuns new, sorduh wurkt thuh homtown hero angul. Jakuhd yewz them az uh wormuhp, n then thuh thurd fit wuhz mor sawlihd kawmpuhtihshuhn, an iht went tew rownz, uhnlesee nawktihs out buhfor that.

Wen mi turn kaym I wenout tuh sho Jak I wuhdn juhstuh tuhmayduh kan – I new I wuhdn guhnuh beedihm, buhdI fihgurd ihf I snap muh jab an stayd uhway fruhmihz rit I kd at leest mayk uh showihn. I dihdn wawnuh wayst thuh awpurtewnihdee, an nawt mihks iht uhp wihthihm. Kors I dihdn rihlee wawnuh sleep threw iht, eethur. Anaz I wawkt tuh thuh rihng thair wuhz Jak, standihn ihnihz kornur an wawchihn mee kuhm. Thawuhz thuh furstim Id evur seen ihm ihn persuhn – wuhz spost tuh meedihm buhfor thuh fit, buhdeed ruhn layt an juhs went rit awn ihntuh hihz dresihn rewmm.

So I gedout thair, an thuh ref gihvz uhs ar ihnstruhkshuhnz, an az I i ihm uhp I see uh mark awnihz fays, so I kd see Anguhs at leest gawduh gluhv awnihm. Dihd mee good tuh see that, kuhz Anguhs threw puhnchihz lik fawlihn treez. I fihgurd wihth mi speed Id dew bedur – an then thuh bel rang. I thihnk maybe Demsee wuhz sleepihn, kuhz wen wee met ihn thuh senuruh thuh rihng thuh furs reeyul jab I shawt hihdihm rit ihn thuh mihduluh thuh forhed. I prest thuh uhtak, an fur maybe haf thuh rown wee danst uhrown traydihn puhnchihz that dihdn dew muhch eethur way. Then, I dont rihlee no how, uh left hook gawt tewihm. Snaptihz hed bak, buht thuh rit kraws mihstihm biuh miul. Hee bakt awfuh biht, an I chayst ihm. I blawktuh few jabz wihth mi gluhvz, an kawdihm uhgen wihth uh kuhpuluh

mi on. Hee bakt uhp uh kuhpul mor steps, an I stardiht thihnkihn that maybee thihs wuhz guhnuh bee bedurihn I thawt, maybee Demsee wuhz washt uhp, ur I wuhz bedurihn eneebuhdee evur tol mee – an I ges maybee I stawpt tuh thihnk how grayt I wuhz fur tew lawng, kuhz I dihdn eevihn see eneethihng kuhmihn. I shduh noihn tuh ihgspekt iht – Demsee awlwayz went bihg tuh thuh bawdee. BuhdI thihnk I gawt so huhnguhp hedhuhntihn that I furgawt uhbout duhfens. Hee hiht mee kleen – ihf yuh thihnk hee wuhz pulihn hihz shawts I gawduh kuhpuluh rihbz that stihl ruhmembur uhthurwiz. Krist. Id nevr bihn hiht lik that – I bihn nawkt kold buhfor, buhdI stihl say thawuhz thuh hardihst puhnch I evur took.

Thair ar stihl awl thoz storeez uhbout Jak cheetihn – lik wenee beet jenulmuhn Jihm, Korbihst sedee held uh sihks ihneh bolt ihnihz gluhv, an hihdihm sidwayz, wihth thuh heduh thuh bolt. Buhduh man that hihts lik that dont need tuh cheet. Wee wur yewzihn gluhvzuh kuhpuluh ownsihz ovur thuh mihnuhmuhm raygyuhlaysshuhn wayt, anee stihl dam neer bent mee ovr. Dam neer feltihz fihst kuhmihn out thuhthur siduh mee. Awl thuh wihnd juhs went ruhshihn ouduh mee, an I kdn gedihst bak. Wuhz lik evreewuhn ihn thuh plays ihnhayuld at thuh saym tim, n suhkt awl thuh good air uhway fruhm mee. I stagurd uhbiht, an bakt uhp tuh bi suhm tim, an thenuh kors Demsee smelz bluhdn an kuhmz ihn fur thuh kihl. Pusht mee bak ihntuh thuh rops an layd ihntuh mee, both hanz, tuh thuh bawdee. Hee wuhz stihl awn mee wen thuh bel ruhng.

Wuhz uhbout thuh sweedihst uh belz evur sowndihd. Iv nevr bihn hapeeur duh hav uh fit ovur wihth. Ihf ihduh bihn uh tew rowndur, I mit nawduh kuhm out fur thuh sekihnd – ur I wooduh, buhdI bedI wooduh wokihn uhp ihn thuh bak wihthout enee memreezuh leevihn thuh rihng. N Demsee wuhz old then, tew – kant eevihn uhmahjihnihm ihnihz prim.

Lawduh peepul say nowuhn kduh lihkt Awlee, buhdI fihgur Demsee ihnihz prim wuhzuh mach fur eneewuhn. Hee wuhz tuhfurihn awl gedout. Grew uhp that way – fitihnihn minihn townz an traynyardz fruhm thuh ayjuh sikhsteen ur so. Stood ihn furihz bruhthur wuhns, thats howee gawt stardiht. Fawduhndur hihz naym, an iht stuhk. Hihz reeul naym wuhz Wihlyuhm – kors hee also fawt az kihd blakee an thuh nawnpuhriul, buhd I thihnk thuh naym that rihlee duhzihm juhstihs ihs thuh muhnasuh mawlur. Kuhz wen hee layd ihntuh yuh wihth both hanz lik hee dihd tuh mee, hee wuhz pyur murdur.

Thuh dawktur wawnuhd tuh chek mee out fur brokihn rihbz, buhdI woodn ledihm. Nawt that nit. I fihgurd I only had wuhn chans tuh see Jak Demsee fit, an I dihdn wawnuh mihs iht, so I juhs threw muh rob awn an hedihd out tuh wawch. Dihdn eevihn tayk muh gluhvz awf, kuhz I dihdn wawnuh mihsuh sekihnd.

I new ihduhd bee uh good fit. Id nevr fawt Jak buhfor, so thur wuhz bownd tuh bee uh feelihn out prawses. Buht Charlee an hihmuhd met wuhnsur twis buhfor. Charlee – thats Charlee Buhlawnjay, thuh amuhchur lit heveewat champuh Kanuhduh – hee wuhz kwihkur thenuh hihkuhp. Good powur fur uh manuh hihz bihd. Hee an Demsee wur bownd tuh pudawn uh good sho. Rihlee dihdn start awf tew tuhrihfihk tho. Charlee wuhz plawdihn rownd thuh rihng awn thuh soulz uh hihz feet, anihz hanz wur lo. I thihnk Jak kduh taykihnihm out ihn thuh furt haf rowndurso, kuhz Charlee dihdihn dew muhch, juhs surkuhld an tawst ouduh few jabz. I akchuhlee hurd uh kuhpuluh katkawlz fruhm thuh krowd, kuhzuh thuh pays. Demseed puhnch, n Charleed kech iht ur hang awn tihl thuh ref sepuhraydihduhm. Jak muhstuh hurd suhmuh thuh heklurz, kuhz tuhwordz thuh enduh thuh furst rownd hee gawt ihntuh form. Nevur wuhz muhchuhvuh dansur, thuh way suhm feluhz ar, buht hee had good mewvmihnt, anihz puhnchihz wur reeyul krihsp an neet. Wen hee

fawt mee awlihz puhnchihz wur fiurd awf wuhnaduh tim. Uhntihl hee had mee awn thuh rops, eneewayz. Thats how hee stardihd awf wiht Charlee, tew, buht awluhvuh suhdihn hee gawdihz flo, an wuhn puhnch led tew uhnuhtur, an mostuhvuhm gawt thru kleen. Lihdul mor jews awnihm an hee miduh had Charlee ihn truhbul. Aziht wuhz, hee baktihm rit tewihz kornur, so wen thuh bel rang Charlee dihdn eevihn hav tuh mewv.

Demsee wuhz breethihnuh biht hard, an hee tookuh bihduh wawdur, an bairlee eevihn lookt at Jairee thuh greek, hew wuhz gihvihnihmuh bihduh advis. Charlee juhs sat thair, starihn at thuh mihduluh thuh rihng. Hee dihdn tayk enee wawdur, anihz kornurmen wur yelihn adihm tuh ledihz hanz go, tuh thro suhm fuhkihn puhnchihz, fur krisayk, juhs lewsihn uhp an feed Demsee suhm lethur. Yew kd sens iht ihn thuh krowd, thuh antihsihpayshuhn. Wee thawt maybee wee wur guhnuh geduh kayo, n uhgihnst Charlee, hew wuhz kleelee thuh best fiduruh uhs three. Buht wen thuh sekihnd rown stardihd wuhdevur flo Jakuhd fownduhd gawn. Hee kep presihn buht hihz sens uh timihn wuhz awf, an neethur wuhnuh them landihd uh telihn shawt fur thuh restuh thuh fit. I duhno ihf maybee Jak took iht eeze awn Charlee n dihdn wawnuh nawkihm out, or ihf maybee hee tiyurd hihmself out, ur wuht, buht that lihdl sparkuh hihz old self wuhz gawn. Stihl, weed awl gawt tuh seeihm fit, an that wuhz suhmthihn speshul ihn ihtself.

Buhd I dihd get thuh chans tuh see suhmthihn els that nit, an iht wuhz suhmthihn that thuh payihn awdeeyihns dihdnt. Aftur wee wuhz awl showurd an chaynjd ihntuh ar bes sewts, wee lind uhp tuh shayk hanz wiht Demsee. Anguhs an Charlee wur prihdee kawm uhboudiht kuhz thayd both medihm buhfor buht fur mee ihwuhz thuh furs tim meetihn thuh champ wihtout gluhvz awn. Aniht wuhz uh bihg deeul – lik meetihn thuh prezihdihnt, ur thuh kween, ursuhmthihn. Thur wuhdn uh bihgur naym, ur uh bihgur suhlebruhdee. Jak

wuhz thuh furs bihg sports star thur wuhz. Evreewuhn luhvdihm, kuhzeed stardiht out thuh saym way wee dihd. Had lik ten, uhlevihn oldur bruhthurz an sihurstur an maydihz lihvihn awn thuh rod. Dihdn madur how rihchee gawt, wee kd ruhlayt tewihm. Anee wuhz good uhboudiht tew, hee ruhmemburd wair hee kaym fruhm. Eevihn stawpihn aftur tuh chat, wel that wuhz suhmthihn suhm uhthur fidurz woodihntuh duhn.

Wuhdn enee bihg pruhdukhshuhn, hee dihdn hav no kamruhz rownd tuh pudiht ihn thuh paypur, hee juhs dihd iht kuhzee new wuhdiht wood meen tew uhs. Hee kuhm ovur, sed tuh Anguhs “nis fit kihd” an tuh mee hee grabdihz jaw an mayduh fays an sed “nis puhnch” an laft wen I held muh siduhn sed “yew tew.” An then hee sed tuh Charlee “awf nit, Charlee, yewl gedihm nekst tim” an then hee wuhz awnihz way uhgen.

Thair wur uhfew peepul down thuh hawl, peepul hew wurkt ihn thuh theeuhdur, juhs waytihn thair furuh glihmposuh hihm, an hee wuhz nis tuh them tew, nawdihn an smilihn tuh them, juhs lik uh pawluhtihshuhn, an thairz uh kuhpuluh kawps wihtihm so thay dont get ihnihz way. An good thihng forihm, tew.

Jak wuhz maybee thurdee feet uhway bi then, wawkihn slow soz evreewuhn kd tayk thur look, wen awluhvuhshuhtihn thihs feluh juhmps ouduh uh dor. Hee wuhz uh bihg feluh tew, az tawl az Anguhs. Hee throwz thihs bihg klumzee puhnch yew kd see fruhm uh miuluh way n Jak duhkt iht prihdee eeze buht thuh gi throwz iht so hard heez awf balihnts anihz momentuhm kaireezihm rit ihntuh Jak an thay both go krashihntuh thuh flor. Thuh bihg feluhz awntawpuh Jak, n heez triihnuh lay ihntewihm, buht nuhtihn wuhz rihlee landihn kleen. Heez kursihn lik mad, an thuh tew kawps grabihm an hawlihm uhp an slamihm ihntuh thuh wawl. Demsee gets uhp, an yew kn see heez madurihn hel, an Im startihn tuh thihnk weer guhnuh see uh reemaykuh wuhdee dihd tuh bihg Jess Wihlurd. Buht

ihnsted hee juhs duhsts awfihz jakiht an looks at thuh guy likheez triyihnuh fihgur out hewee
ihz.

Thenee don eevihn say nuhthihn, juhs starts wawkihn uhway. Heed gawn maybee
ten steps wen wuhnuh thuh kawps sez “Mihstur Demsee whuhduhyuh wawnuhs tuh dew
wihthihm?” an Demsee duhdn eevihn look bak juhs sez ovurihz sholdur “wuhdevur yuh
wawt, boyz” an ihts playn az day hihm an thuh Greek ar getihn ouduh town an nevur
lookihn bak. An then thuh tew kawps, tew bihg skawchmen, thay turn thuh gi uhrawn an
heez stihl yelihn at Demsee, kursihn fur awleez wurth. Wuhnuh thuh kawps juhs hawlz awf
an beltsihm wuhn, ridihn thuh mouth, hopihn tuh shudihm uhp. Buht wenee pulzihz han bak
thuh feluh juhs smiulz adihm, bluhd fruhmihz buhst lihp smeerd awl ovurihz yeluh teeth, n
starts ihn awn Demsee uhgen.

Demseed turnd uhrown wen thuh kawp hihdihm thuh furs tim, so hee seez thuh
kawps sekihnd puhnch. Wihth thuh uhthur kawp holdihn hihm ihwuhz prihdee hard tuh get
ouduh thuh way, so eevihn tho thuh feluh seez iht kuhmihn hee kant mewv anee tayksiht rit
awn thuh poyntuh thuh chihn. Thuh uhthur kawp letsihm go juhs azthuh puhnch hihtsihm
anihz feet kuhm uhp awf thuh floran evreethihn an wenee kuhmz downee hihtsthuh grown
so hardee bounsihz an thurz no dout that heez out kold.

N Demsee lafs an sez “hel – ihf eneeyuh yew kd puhnch lik that yuh miduh beet
mee!” Then hihm an thuh Greek go out thuh dor at thuh enduh thuh hawl, an get thuh hel
ouduh town, juhs lik I fihgurd. Dam, hee wuhz wuhnuh thuh grayts.

muh gostuhd drown

Uhm nawt shur wi iht hapihnd. Wuhzihn that eethur uh uhs wur ihruhzihtuhbul, ur that wee wur blon uhway bi suhm skreemihn kays uh luhv. Iht mit bee rewd tuh say iht, buhd awl iht wuhz wuhzuh roul ihn thuh hay. An ihts nawt lik I ledur awn. Shee new wuhdiht wuhz, tew. Ihts nawt lik I had tuh koks ur ouduh hur kloz.

Shee wuhz awlredeeh ihn bed wen I kuhm ihntuh thuh hous. Now thair aynt menea farm wihmihn hew kn uhford thuh tim tuh lay down furuh nap ihn thuh mihduhluhtuh day. An thats thuh onlee day I evur seen awl thuh kihdz ouduh thuh hous, eevihn thuh lihdl wuhnz. Ihwuhz kold that day, tew, eevihn fur that wihnur, thuh kinduh day nuhnuhtuh kihdz wooduh wawnihd tuh go outsid. Shee wawnihd thuh hous emtee fur suhm reezuhn morihnuh lihdl peesenkwiiht. Iht nevur hiht morihn thurdeesevihn duhgreez buhlo zero furuh strechuh uhbout three muhnths that wihnur. Thuh drihfs uhrown thuh hous seemd lik buhnkurz, azihf wihnur wuhz dihgihn ihtself ihn furevur. Thats wen iht hapihnd – ihn thuh mihduluh that.

Thur wuhzihn that muhch wihnd that day, so eevihn wihthiht beeihn koldurihnuh wichihz tiht, Jihmuhd lodihd uhp thuh kihdz an wen ihntuh town. I had suhm ihkskews redee fur kuhmihn ihntuh seeur, lik Id ruhn ouduh kawfee ihn thuh bunkhous an I wuhz wuhndrihn ihf I kd boro uh haf pownd urso. I stood ihnsid thuh dor an hawlurd forur, an

shee kawld out tuh mee fruhm thuh bedroom. I kihkt awf muh boots an pudihm bi thuh fiur shee had goihn. Gayv ihduh stur, tew, sihns ihwuhz getihn low.

I smiuld wen I sawur uhp tewur nek ihn thuh kuhvurs. I sez “hi, Lihl.” Thats awl wee sed tuh eech uhthur thuh hol day. Hmm. Nevur thawduh that buhfor. Shee nevur seduh thihng tewmee. Shee hawld bak awl thuh kuhvurz — uh hardur thihng tuhdew then yewd thihnk, that yeer. Beeihn so kold thuh bed wuhz awl truhst uhp wihth evree blankiht thay hadn gihvihn tuh thuh kihdz. Stihl, shee hoystihd em awl uhp, an shur az Im lookihn yuh ihn thuh fays I nodihstihm awl, awnihst tuh gawd. Duhno wi thay struhk mee fuhnee. Lord noz ihwuhz kold uhnuhf tuh need suhm ekstruh layurz, buht shee miduh gawn uh biht ovurbord. Thair wuhzuh blew stript flanul sheet, tew thihn worn blankihts – wuhn yeluh an wuhn blew, uh thihkur gray blankiht, uh morur les blew pachwurk kwihlt an then an afgan foldihd uhkraws thuh bawduhm uhthuh hol wurks. Shee muhstuh bihn glad tuh put awl thuh wayduhviht down wen I gawt seduld ihn.

I strihpt az kwihklee az I kd — muh boots wur bak ihn thuh fruhnt rewm wihth muh kot, so awlz I had left wur muh shurt an muh uhndurshurt. I tawstihm ovur thuh bakuhvuh chair. I puld awf muh slaks, lawng jawns, an skiveez awl az wuhn an ledihm fawl. Thuh belt buhkuhl kluhnkt weniht hiht thuh flor. Duhno wi I ruhmembur that, buhdI dew.

That lef mee standihn thair, bair ast sep fur muh sawks. I hookt both pairz ovur muh heelz an hureed ihtuh bed buhfor muh toz froz. Aftur I wuhz ihn iht seemd lik shee waydihd uh sekihn buhfor shee put thuh blankihts down. I duhno wi shee waydihd — seemd lik shee wuhz maybee lookihn at mee, that ur maybee shee wuhz wawnihnuh sho hursel awf. Duhno wi. I surtihnlee wuhdn muhch tuh look at, skihnee az I wuhz, an thuh

meet huhng awf hur ihn slabz. Layihn awnur bak lik shee wuhz, hur brests wur down
ihnur pihts suhmwair. I duhno wair. I nevr rihlee fowndihm. Shee awveeuhslee hadn
fihgurd thuh okayzhuhn wuhz wurth shayvihn for — ur eneethihn els sihns uhbout thuh
tim thuh furs sno flew. Thuh hair huhng awnur laygz lik wurms drid blak awnuh
sidwawk, yuhno, lik wen thay get kawt bi thuh suhn aftur uh rayn.

Bagzuh fat sat uhbuhvur hihps lik tew lovz uh uhnbaykt bred. Hur belee wuhz
shaypt likuh weeulbairo turnd uhpsid down. Hur wiuree hair seemd lik ihwuhz, I duhno,
angree sumhow. Stihl, uh man kdn bee chewzee ihn thoz dayz, an wuhns thuh blankihts
wur ovur uhs, shee wuhdn so bad. I ruhmemburur naym. Lihl. I uhsewm thats short fur
Lihlee buhd I nevr astur dureklee. I dihdn wawnuh, ihn kays I gest rawng, so I kep iht
short. That miduh chaynjdur mind uhbout thihngz, ihf I cuhm out with Lihlee an sheez uh
Lihlith ur suhmthihn. Miduh bihn pihst awf ihf shee fown out I dihdn no ur naym, an I
dihdn wawnuh get kihkt bak tuh thuh buhnhous thad aturnewn. I thihnk shee new mi
naym, buht shee nevr sed iht. Wee kduh tawkt, kuhz wee dihdnt evur kihs, buht wee
dihdn. Shee nevr sed mi naym adawl, nawt lik mi wif dihd wen wee mayd luhv.

I dihdn kihsur. Thuh wumihn haduh muhstash I wooduh did for wen I wuhz twelv
— I dihdn wawnuh tuhch iht, ihn kays iht mayd thuh saym kinduh rasp yuh gawt ruhbihn
mi fays wen I aynt shayvd ihn uhwiul. Stihl, I dihdt kawnsihntrayt awnur bawdee orur
molz orur kornz orur ekstruh powns. Now I aynt triihn tuh cuhm awf az pihkee, I no awl
foks aynt rayul thihn lik mee, buht that wumihn wuhz sawlihd. Sawlihd azuh brihk
shihthous, lik onlee them jurmihn wihmihn seem tuh get. Eneeway, wil wee wur
tuhgethur I set muh iz awn uhthur thihngz — thuh wawl, ur thuh flor, ur whuhdevur.
Uhvenchuhlee I fown thuh spawt rit buhhindur eer, buhkuhz thair shee wuhz purfihkt.

Thair shee dihdn hav no stray tuhfsuh hair, ur enee hangihn heveenihs. Thair, shee kduh almos bihn mi wif ihnsteduh suhmwuhn elsihz. I gruhntihd fur hur sayk — wihmihn lik iht wen thay no yewv ihnjoyd yurself.

Wen I thihnk bak awn iht muh brayn ihnsihsts thadI hurd thuh oudur dor shuhtihn eevihn az I wuhz rolihn awfur. Im shur weniht wuhz hapnihn I nevr hurd enee suhch thihng. Ihts ihn mi memree now, buhdI nevr hurd enee suhch thihng, ur I woodihnuh kep layihn thair. I nevr hurd thuh dor slam shuht, thuh wuhn fruhm outsid tuh thuh kihchihn. I dihd heer bewts kuhmihn uhkraws thuh wood flor, tho. I ruhmembur thihnkihn eevihn az I jurkt mi bawdee ouduh hur bed thadat lees I had tim tuh fihnihsh, then I stardiht skramblihn fur muh kloz. I skewptihm uhp awf thuh flor ihn wuhn armlod, grabd muh shurt awf thuh bakuh thuh chair an eevihn went bak furuh sawk I drawpd — akchuhlee ihwuhz tew, wuhn ihnsid thuh uhthur, sihns I duhbuhldihm uhp uhgihnst thuh kold. Ihwuhz prawblee uh stewpihd thihng tuh go bak, I ges, buhdI dont spoz iht madurd awl that muhch eneeway.

I trid tuh slid thuh wihnd uhpuh wihth wuhn hand at furs, buht that dihdn havuh chans at wurkihn. Thair muhstuh bihn tew ihnchihz thihkuh is awn thuh outsid — so kold thair wuhz prawblee three kordrz uhvan ihneh awn thuh ihnsiduh thuh wihnduh az wel. Ihwuhz stuhk down tihl sprihng. Awl thuh klothz Id gathurd uhp fel bak tuh thuh flor — I wuhz yewzihn both hans awniht, ihnuh panihk bi then, noihn bi thuh nuhmbruh feet hihtihn thuh bordz thadI wuhz uhbout duhn for. I fawt wihth thuh bawduhmuh thuh fraym, triihn tuh gediht tuh let go, juhs slamihn thuh heelzuh muh hanz ihtuh iht, an thuh hol tim nawdeevihn wureeyihn uhbout wuht thay wur guhnuh dewduh mee. Thuh thihng I wureed uhbout mos wuhz wuht thuh hel I wuhz guhnuh dew wihthout muh

bewts, kuhz Id bee deduh kold buhfor I mayd iht ouduh thuh yard, nevr mind tuh thuh nayburz — I haduh go tuh thuh eest nayburz, eevihn tho thay lihvd furthur awf kuhz Jihmz bes frend lihvd tuh thuh westuhvuhs, an hee woodihnuh bihn enee help ihf Jihmuhd warndihm. Thawuhz wen iht uhkurd tuh mee that thawuhz prawblee thuhthr pairuh boots I hurd, hihz naybur. An awl thuh tim thihs ihz goihn threw mi hed I no I aynt mewvihn fast uhnuhf, thay wur guhnuh get holduh mee. I wuhdn guhnuh gedout.

I spoz ihts fuhnee thad I nevr thawt muhch uhbout havihn iht out wihthihm. Jihm I thihnk I kduh taykihn — hee wuhzn uhptuh muh sholdur, an beeyihn az hee ownd thuh plays thuh eeze jawbz awlwayz fel awn hihm. I miduh bihn outnuhmburd, buhdI wuhz hard az meduhl kuhzuh thuh way hee wurkt uhs. Ihf ihtuhd bihn onlee Jihm I wooduh fawt. Eevihn ihf heed onlee brawt Sam wihthihm I miduh stihl haduh chans, buhdt ihwuhz Samz bruthur that wureed mee. Sam haduh prihdee eevihn tempur — but Brews, hee wuhz juhs uhbout thuh nasteeihst suhnuhvuhbihch I evur met. Heed stawpawnyuh soonaz look achuh.

Neethur uhvihm seduh dam wurd — thay muhstuh rihgd iht fruhm thuh start, an had thuh hol thihng pland so thay dihdn eevihn need tuh tawk ovur thuh duhtayulz. Wen Jihm sedee wuhz taykihn thuh kihdz tuh town iht shduh struhk mee awd — wi wood eneewuhn wawnuh tayk thur kihdz wihthihm, wen awl thay dihd wuhz sihduhrownd thuh bakuh thuh frenchmuhnz stor, wihth awl thuh uhthur farmurz, drihnkihn wihskee. *Uhkors* hee dihdn taykihz kihdz tuhsee that — buhdI let muhself bee fewuld. Hel, I mayd muhself bee fewuld. I wawnuhd hihm tuh bee gawn, fur wuhdevur reezuhn, so wen wuhn kaym uhlawng I dihdnt kweschuhn iht. Ihwuhz so kold. I shduh noihn bedur. Jihm muhstuh drawpt awf thuh kihdz at Samz so nowuhn wood bee uhrown tuh see wuht wuhz

goihn awn. Wihth thuh kihdz gawn, thair wuhdn eneewuhn tuh keepihm fruhm dewihn wuhdevur thuh hel thay wawnihd tew. Wuhzihn no uhthur hiurd mehn uhrown. Jihmuhd gawtihn rihduh thuh rest uhvuhm.

Evreethihng wuhz sed uhp purfihkt. Nowuhn kd see eneethihn. Lik I say, thay kaym uhp buhhind mee wihthouduh wurd, juhs thuh kluhnkuh thur bewts awn thuh flor. Wihthout eethur uhdurihn so muhch azuh sihluhbul thay pihkt mee uhp an slamd mee faysfurst rit ihntuh thuh wihnduh. Dihd iht uhgen, an then uhgen, uhntihl thayd tawst mee ihntuh thuh snobank thatuhd piuld uhp uhgihnst thuh house, wihnduh bee damd. Iht kduh bihn thuh is ur thuh glas that kuht mi hed tuh shiht, buht suhmthihn dihd. Wihth awl thoz ihnehizuh is kaykt awn, thuh wihnduh paktuh heluhvuh puhnch, an wen I hiht thuh sno I juhs sat thair furuh kuhpuluh sekihnz, triihn tuh grab muh wihts uhgen. I thihnk Jihm sed suhmthihn tuh me threw thuh buhstihd wihnduh, buht Id had mi bel ruhng prihdee good so I kdn rihlee mayk sensuhviht. I wooduh sworn then he wuhz uhpawluhjizihn tuh mee, buht wuhdee dihd tuh mee aynt thuh kinduh thihng uh gi duhz ihfeez feelihn soree for yuh. Thuh thihng that wok mee uhp wuhz thuh sownduhv uh shawtguhn goihn awf — that gawt thuh kawbwebz out, an awluhvuhsihndihn hurt washt ovur mee, fruhm awl thuh shardzuh payn ihn muh skihn. I new hee hadn shawt mee, an I thawt maybee Jihmuhd shawt Lihl ded. Ur maybee heed shawt Sam — kuhz I no furuhfak that suhnuhvuhbihch tookuh pokurtew adihz wif, tew.

Seemd lik I wuhz onlee layihn thair furuh sekihn, buhdiht muhstuh bihn lawngur, kuhz ihn no tim thay kaym truhjihnn rown thuh kornuruh thuh hous, thur bewts puhnchihn grewvz ihn thuh hard tawp layuruh sno. Thuh sown tol mee thay wur kuhmihn. Yuhno, that skweekihn sound yuh get wen yur wawkihn awn dri sno. I ruhkoyuld, gropt

uhpwurd, fown muh feet, an took awf aduh Gawd-help-us ruhn, endihd uhp awn muh fays. Trihpt uhp wen muh rit foot kuht threw thuh tawp kruhstuh sno an duhg ihntuh thuh powdur uhndurneeth. Thay kaym buhhih mee, juhs wawkihn buht thawuhz mor uhfihsihnt then mi frenzeeyihn an fawlihn. Thay gaynd grown eech tim I haduh stawp tuh put muhself rit. Uhgen, I nevr sawihm kuhmihn — wuhnuh them klamtihz hanz awn muh sholdurz, an thuh uhthur wuhn wen at mee wihth thuh buhtuh uh thuh spreadr ihn muh stuhmihk. Awl thuh air wenouduh mee an I went tuh mi neez. Brews wuhz puhnchihn mee ovur an ovur ihn thuh fays an I kd see Sam puluh bihduh kanvuhs out fruhm waired tuhkt iht ihntuh ihz belt. Iht lookt likuhn old hawkee bag, wihth wuhn handul anuh drawstrijng at thuh tawp. I duhno wair thuh hel Jihm wuhz – maybee hee stayd bak tuh tayk kairuh thihngz ihnihz bedroom. Hom kurekshuhn, wee cawldiht bak then.

I fawdiht awf az wel az I kd, buht stihl endihd uhp ihnsid iht. Wuhns I wuhz ihn thair, they wenat mee awl ovur uhgen. I kd feeyul thur boots nawkihn mee awl ovur, an Im shur Brews pihkt uhp that guhn uhgen. Dihdn eevihn shewt me, juhs hiht mee wihth iht tihl I kwiht mewvihn.

I dont ruhmembur thuh trihp. Thay muhstuh nawkt mee out good uhnuhf thad I stayd out tihl thay wur duhn an gawn. Wen I kuhm tew I wuhz stihl ihn thuh sak — an bi Jeezuhz wuhz iht kold. Ihwuhz kold az hel. I kd feel partsuh muh armz an chest an laygz, buht eneethihn awn muh feedur muh hanz may az weluh nawt bihn uhtacht, fur awl I kd feeul. I kant truhst muh fihks awn tim so I don no how lawng I wuhz ihn that bluhdee bag. Id say ihwuhz tew dayz, buhdiht kdnuh bihn, ur Iduh bihn ded. I spentuh heluhvuh lawduh tim wurkihn awn thuh drawstrijng — fihgurd fur shur I kd wurk iht opihn, buht

yuhno awl I kd dew wuhz strech iht out fur uhbout three ihnchihz — kdn eevihn fiht muh hand threw thuh houl. I fihgur that muhstuh taykihn uhbout ten owrz, buht maybe ihwuhz onlee lik wuhnur maybe tew. Maybe ihwuhz onlee twenee mihnihts. Awl I kd dew wuhz stihk muh mouth tuh thuh houl an eethur gasp ihn fur air ur yel out fur help. Kors I gayv uhp awn that prihdee kwihk — kd tel thair wuhzn nowuhn tuh heer mee. Stihl, bi thuh tim I puld muh lihps bak fruhm thuh houl I kd feeluh rihnguh frawsbit uhrowndihm. Thawuhz thuh wurst, feelihn that, ledihn iht heeul, wurs then lewzihn muh fihngurz.

I peekt out thuh houl az muhch az I kd — kdn see vairee far, buhd I dihd mayk out wair I wuhz. Jihm haduh slew awn thuh west ejuh hihz north kordr — awlwayz yewstuh kuhmplayn uhbout how yewслиhs ihwuhz, how muhch muhnee that uhnplantuhbul land kawstihm evree yeer. Heed stuhk mee way out thair, wair nowuhn wood kuhm lookihn. I thawt Id di fruhm thuh kold out thair awn thuh is, an then kuhm sprihng thaw muh gostuhd drown.

Iht muhstuh bihn mor thenuh nit, eneeway. I swairduh gawd I ruhmembur iht getihn dark an then lit uhgen. Muhstuh bihh thuh wormihst kuhpuluh dayz thuh hol wihnur, ur Iduh bihn uh ded man fur shur. Stihl fihgur I shduh bihn. I ruhmembur heerihn thuh wiuld anihmulz at nit, an beeihn skaird theyd kuhm get mee. I spent mostuh thuh nit wihth muh i prest uhp tuh thuh darknihs an hawlurihn evree wuhnsoawfihn tuh keep thuh anihmulz awf. Hel, maybe thuh wihnur beeihn suh kold wuhzuh blesihn ihn duhsgiz. Eevihn wulvz dihdn kuhm out intuh thuh kold tuh bawthur wihth mee that nit. I wuhz so skihnee thay muhstuh fihgurd iht wuhdn wurth iht fur thuh meet.

Wuhn momihnt I wuhz ihn thuh bag. Thuh nekst brawt thihs sown lik rihpihn. Iht muhstuh bihn urlee mornihn, ur maybe mihdday. Ur maybe onlee thuh saym day, ihnthuh eevnihn. I duhno. Wenevur, I muhstuh fawlihn uhsleep, ur past out dur wuhdevur. Gawd, I hop tuh nevur spend uhnuthur nit lik that wuhn, ur tew, ur howevur lawng ihwuhz. I kant rihlee say fur shur, kuhz neer thuh end thair I wuhz sleepihnuhlawt. I thihnk that hapihnz wen yewv gawt — wuhhduhyuh kaw! iht? Hipuhthurmeeyuh, I thihnk thuh dawkturz tol mee ihwuhz.

Waykihn uhp thuh way I dihd tho, that muhstuh bihn bewduhful. I don rihlee ruhmembur uh thihng uhboudiht. Wuht hapihnd ihz thuh naybur kuhm bi. Heed spent uh lawduh hihz wihnur out awn Jihmz slew. Jihm mit nevuruh bawt is skayts fur hihz kihdz, buhdihz naybur dihd fur hihz dawdur, an they helpt themselvz tewihz pawnd wenevur thay wawnihd iht. Glad thay dihd. Ihwuhz thuh dad hew fownmee — slaptuh puhk rit ihntuh muh bak. Ihwuhz wuhnuh thuh homayd woodihn wuhnz. Hurt lik hel. Heed bihn yewzihn mee azuh gol post. Wen I let out uh lihduhl hawlur hee cuhm ovur fur uh closur look. Hee kuht mee ouduh thuh bag wihthuh nif. Thay had blankihts tuh rap rown mee, an kawfee, an hawt chihkihn brawth. Stihl took furevur tihl I felt warm uhgen. Kors I stihl haduh goduh thuh dawktur — lawst mostuh muh fihngurz, an toz, buht wawkt ouduh that plays uhndur muh own powur, so ih kduh bihn wurs. Mos foks fihgurd I shuhduh did, thuh dawkturz ihnklewdihd. Dihdn tho. I don thihnk I wuhz evur thuh saym uhgen — wuhns yuh see that siduh peepul, yur nawt guhnuh buhleev tew eezee uhgen that thayv gawduh good sid tewihm.

Yuhno, I dihd go bak tuh seeihm laydur. Wuhdnt fur yeerz, buhdI went bak. Bi then thuh oldihst kihdz wur neerlee awl grown uhp. Ihwuhz thuh weerdihst thihng. I sat

down tuh dihnur with them an thur hol famlee. Hel – eevihn gawt them uthur tew basturdz tuh kuhm out. Kors thay dihdn wawnuh buhdaftur I toldihm thuh newz I had, wel thay chaynjd thur minz prihdee kwihk. Spent thuh nit shewtih thuh shiht, an kachihn uhp awn ol timz. Wuhz almos lik ol timz, ihgsep thur wuhz that uhndurkuriht ruhnihn threw evreethin wee sed.

I wuhz suhprizd az hell tuh see Jim n ihz wif uhgihn. Awlwayz figurd hee wooduh shawt that bihch. I wooduh.

thuh weed (ur thuh kwihbek kowboy)

Hmf. Ges thurz wuhn suhmur I kant furget, an I kant furgediht fur tew thihngz. Furst uhvawl wuhz muhmuhz gardihn. Now keep ihn mind wee wuhz rit ihn Palihsurz triangul, an eevihn tuhday yuh onlee get bi awnuh wihnganuhprair ihn thuh triangul. Ihwuhz layt ihn thuh thurdeez an weed haduh few lawng yeerzuh fitihn thuh sand. Suhm yeerz ihwood pil uhp uhgenst thuh hous, ihduhd blo ihn threw lihdul chihnks uhrown thuh wihnduhhz, no madur how menee timz wee trid tuh seeylihm awf. Mee an thuhthur kihdz wurkt lik dawgz, an mi dadaz wel, out ihn them feeuldz, an mostuh thuh tim ihdihdihn dew no good, an wee stihl duhpendihd awn thuh doul. An then wee had thihs wuhn yeer – muhstuh bihn aftur three, for yeerzuh feeyuldz that lookt lik beechihz – wair evreethihng juhs turnd uhrown. Now eevihn thuh krawp wuhz shiht that yeer. Wee stihl dihdn maybee havuh ful pantree ouduhviht, buht mi pairihnts stihl ihnsihstihd that wee sel awf wuht wee kd, an wihth that muhnee bawt thuh few thihngz wee kdn dew wihthout jurihn wihnur.

So maybee wee dihdn eet so muhch that yeer eethur, buht wee wurihn awn ruhleef, an that ment suhmthihn tuh mi fawthur. Mee, mi stuhmihk growuld lawng an hard uhnuhf that Iduh taykihn thuh ruhleef eneeway, buht muh dad kd nevr get so huhngree thadeed swawloihz prid. Miduh bihn bedur awf bi taykihn wuht thuh

guhvurmihnt gayv, buhd ihf mi dad fihgurd we kd stand awn ar own feet, then thats wuht wee dihd. Dihdn madur ihf wee kdn uhford tuh bi shewz, juhs az lawng az wee kd stand ihn ar bair feet, thawuhz uhnuhf. I ruhmembur dad beeihn so prowduh that krawp. Ten yearz laydur, ur urleer, an hee prawblee wooduh kurstuh blew streek an wuhndurd wi gawd haydihdihm. Buht that yeer enee bihduh lif wuhz welkuhm. Wee took thuh krawp awf thuh olfashuhnd way, wihth swet an horsihz, buhdI dout ihn enee yeer ihf iht wooduh bihn wurth thuh gas tuh puliht down bi mucheen. Wuhz pihdihful – buhg eetihn an lesihn haf thuh siz iht shduh bihn, buhdiht wuhzuh krawp, an weed wurkt ihduhp ouduh uh dezurt. Yuh kant uhmajihn wuht that dihd fur uhs, thuh hope iht gayv uhs. Wuhzuh few mor yearz buhfor weed sordihd thihngz out ihn thuh triangul, an ihf iht wuhdn fur that yeer I don thihnk weeduh maydiht threw. That wuhn yeer, that told uhs ihf wee kep adiht, an wurkt lik thuh devul ihmself, weed eevenchuhlee get suhm ruhword.

BuhdI kant say ihwuhz thuh krawp that dihdih. LikI sed, thuh krawp wuhzn wurthuh puhdul ihn thuh oshuhn, eevihn tho iht wuhzuh huhnurd timz bedurihn eneethihn els weed duhn ihn yearz. An wee new iht, thadiht wuhz krap, buht thair wuhz wuhn thihng that wuhzuhnt. Muhmuhz gardihn. Now I stihl aynt gawduh klew how shee manihjdiht, buht yeer aftur yeer muhmuh awlwayz manihjd tuh koks suhmthihn ouduh nuhthihn. Thuh ruhleef wuhz spred so thihn wihth so menee peepul needihniht thad iht mit nawduh bihn uhnuhf tuh keep uhs awl uhliv. I meen thihngz wur so bad yuh kdn eevihn go bi awl yur nuhsesihteez. Weed gouh yeer wihthouduh biduh meet suhmtimz. Ayduh lawduh thihngz that wur moslee flowur an wawdur. Wuhz muhmuhz gardihn that kep uhs fed. Shee dihdn havuh lawduh spays foriht buht wuht shee had shee pakt evree ihnchuhv ful. Wuhzuh smawlur spays then Muhm wooduh likt buht Dad kep triihnuh

tayk evree skwair foot furthuh farm. Buht Muhm awlwayz ihnsihstihd that wee keepuh smawl pachuh lawn out fruhnt, anuh gardihn out bak. Shee nevur mayduh bihg seen uhviht, sheed juhs shoot thihs look adihm, an heed no tuh stay uhway fruhmur flowurz anur tuhmayduhz.

Ovur awn thuh west siduh thuh hous, thuh kornuruh thuh shed meduhp wihth thuh hous, anuhp uhgihnst thuh shed wuhz thuh barn an thuh chihkihn kewp, n thuh bihfee wuhz out past thaduhbiht. Eevihn furthur out wuhzuh lihdl shak that haduh buhnchuh bedz pusht uhp uhgihnst thuh bak wawl, an ihn fruhnuh them wuhz uh hol buhnchuh awdzanenz lik brokihn harnihsihz ur old muhsheen parts, stuhf dad thawdeed fihks wuhn day. Muhmz gardihn wuhz stuhk ihn thuh kornur neer thuh hous, so iht had wawlz tuh thuh south an west that kep thuh wurstuh thuh wihnd awfuh biht. I duhno, maybe that lihdl bihduh ekstruh sheltr let juhs uhnuhf soyul stay put. Maybe ihwuhz thuh lihdl ekstruh shayd. I duhno. I stihl dont see how shee manihj tuh gro eneethihng. Kuhz thuh drihftihn wuhz bad, buhdiht wuhzn thuh onlee prawbluhm. Ihwuhz that, an thuh heet, an drout, an buhgz. Evree yeer wuhnuh them, ur awluhvihm tuhgethur wood keep yuh fruhm getihn suhmthihn uhp ouduh thuh grown. An then ihf yuh dihd, thur wuhz anihmulz an eevihn yur on nayburz tuh gard uhgihnst, ur thayd swip eneethihng eevihn hafway edihbul.

N that yeer wuhz wursihn most. Yew kduh pihkt uhp ar feeyuldz an pluhnktihm down ihn eejihpt an thay wooduh lookt ridat hom, thay wur that dri. I bet wee went fihfdee, sihkstee strayt dayz wihthout eevihnuh drawpuh rayn. Prawblee wenuh muhnth wihthout eevihn seeihnuh sihngul klowd. Wuhz juhs nuhthihn buht heetihnsuhn. An thuh wihnd, iht hihtyuh likuh durdee panuh hawt oyul – juhs blastihd yur iz wihth heet an

griht. Gawt soz wee wur rashuhnihn ar wawdur uhbiht, kuhz thuh slew outbak wuhz midee low, anthuh neerihst krihk woodihnuh sayuld uh paypur bot. Ihwuhz eezeeur that yeer awn uhs kihds tho, kuhz thihngz wur so bad dad dihdn see enee yews ihn maykihn uhs wurk thuh feeyuldz. Dihdn stawp hihm fruhm wurkihn rown thuh klawk, juhs tihnkurihn rihlee. Hee dihdn uhkawmplihsh muhch, hee juhs kdn help buht tri.

Muhm dihd thuh saym thihng – shee wurkt tihlur hanz bled suhm dayz. N I wuhzuh lihdl tik at thuh tim, maybee ayt urso, buhdI ruhmembur thihnkihn shee wuhz krayzee tuh wurk so hard dayihn an dayout wen nuhthihn wuhz evur guhnuh gro. Shee muhstuh trid fordee dihfurnt tipsuh vejeez. I meen shee haduh way wihth plants, fruhm peeze tuh rubarb tuh korn, eevihn tuh thuh rouh rozihz shee kep way out at thuh bak ejuh thihngz. No madur how bad thihngz gawt, shee nevu sakrihfist that rouh rozihz. Suhm yeerz thay wdn gro so wel, buht sheed nevr gihv uhp that ro tuh enee sorduh food that miduh duhn bedur, no madur how starvd wee gawt. Ihn bedur yeerz shee nevr planihd morihnuh ro, eethur. Awlwayz juhs that wuhn ro, red an pihnk an wit an eevihn suhm yeluhz. Muhm luhvd them rozihz, awlwayz haduh vawz uhvihm awn thuh kihchihn taybul, an wuhz awlwayz brihngihn ihm ihtuh thuh church, gihvihn peepl bewkayz fur wedihnz an fyewnuruhlz ur enee uhthur speshul okayzhuhnz an that. Suhmtimz iht dihdn seemtuh madur how bad thuh wethur wuhz, yew kd kown awn them rozbushihz blewmihn. Eevihn that yeer, eevihn tho thuh buhdz bairlee opihnd, thay wur thair, uh lihdl bihduh green out uhgihnst thuh chihkihnwiur shee puduhp uhgenst thuh krihdurz. Thay wur out thair, thur tit lihdl hedz wur bruhshihn thuh grown, lik thay wuhz triihn tuh dihg ihtuh thuh durt tuh find suhm shayd. An that yeer shee skweezd uhnuhf ouduh hur gardihn tuh gihv uhsuh meeuluh day, at leest, an that wuhdn muhch, buht morihn suhm

gawt. That yeer eevihn shee had truhbl, so wil sheed mayduh few pachihzuh green hur gardihn wuhz moslee thuh saym blak az dadz feeyuldz.

Buht lik I sed, shee wuhz out thair evree sihngul day, sep fur suhndayz, juhs triihn tuh koks suhmthihn uhp, bee iht beenz ur skwawsh ur wuhdevur, juhs suhmthihn tuh feed uhs. Yewzhuhlee wuht grew wuhz sihklee – weed eet kairuhts that wur yeluh an ihf yuh gawduh bihg wuhn ihwuhz az thihk rownd az yur pihnkee fihngur. Buht eevihn thoz wee shuhvuld down lik is kreem, kuhz threw thuh wihnur awl weed et wuhz turnihps. Evree meeul, evree dihfurnt way yew kd kookihm, suhmzimz azuh sid dihsh, suhmzimz awl bi themselvz, buhdevree sihngul meeul thurdbee turnihps. Sihns thuh furst step I took ouduh mi pairihnts hous I nevur aytn uhnuhthr wuhn. Nevur hav, an nevur wihl.

Huh. I ruhmembur thihs wuhn tim juhs aftur I gawt maireed, Kay, shee mayd thuh mihstaykuh survihn boyuld an masht turnihps. Sheed spent thuh hol afturnoon maykihn that suhpur, uhm shur, an iht wuhzuh hawt suhmur day an shee spent iht ihnfruhnuh thuh stov, buhdI nevur eevihn thawd uhbout that. I saw them turnihps, an I juhs kdn stand tuh havem thair awn thuh dihnur taybul. I kdn buhleev thoz gawdam thihngz had mayd iht bak tuh mee. I stihl shdnuh lawst mi tempur ovur iht, I no iht wuhdn hur fawlt, buhdI kdn help iht. I dihdn say nuhthihn tuh Kay, I juhs pihkt thuh bowl uhp awf thuh taybul, an thuh turnihps wur stihl steemihn. Shee muhstuh juhs taykihn ihm awf thuh stovtawp, an I opihnd uhp thuh kihchihn dor an fiurdihm, boul an awl, oud ihntuh thuh bak yard. Then I klozd thuh dor, sat down an duhg ihn lik nuhthihn wuhz thuh madur. Wuhzuh horihbul thihng tuh dew, an iht uhpset Lihl suhmthihn awful kuhz I don thihnk shee uhndurstood that I wuhdn madat hur, that I wuhz mad at – at thuh turnihps, I ges.

So hel, nekstuh turnihps, eneethihng, no madur how far uhway fruhm beeihn rip iht lookt, wuhz welkuhm awn mi playt. Keep ihn mihnd wee had sihks kihdz pluhs mi foks, an at that tim gramuh wuhz lihvihn wihth uhs tew. Shee did – lesee . . . wooduh bihn thurdeesevihn, thurdeeayt, suhmwair ihn thair. Shee wuhz stihl uhrown that suhmur, eneeway. So thair wuhz ninuh uhs, an muhm strecht that gardihn fur awl ihwuhz wurth tuh keepuhs pruhvidihd for. Thats how bad that yeer wuhz. Nuhthihn kd gro. Wurihnt eevihn enee buhgs that yeer – nawd uhnuhf tuh eet, ur uhnuhf standihn wawdur tuh breed ihn.

I ruhmembur playihn outsid wuhn afturnoon. Dihgihn ihn thuh durt, kuhz thawuhz rihlee awl yew kd dew. Ihmuhstuh bihn laytihnthuh day, kuhz thuh shadoz uhrown thuh hous wur lawng. I ruhmembur lookihn uhp kuhz I felt uh dihfrihns ihn thuh breez. Thuh wihnd wuhz lik getihn lihkt bi uh kat. Hawt an ruhf az sanpaypur, buht suhmthihn uhboudiht mayd mee look uhp. Iht mituh juhs seemduh biht koolur buht maybee iht juhs felt uh biht wedur. Wehl wen I lookt uhp, damd ihf I dihdn see thuh bihgiht, darkihst klowd Id seenihn yeerz. Bi thuh tim Id ruhntuhthuh hous shoutihn hay lookiht, lookiht thuh ski! Muhmuh, Burnees, Sairuh, an Lewkuhs wur awl oudawn thuh fruhnt porch, stairihn uhp at thuh klowd. I bet Skawt, Greg an Dad wur dewihn ihgzaklee thuh saym thihng out wair thay wur mendihn thuh fens. Kinduh lik uh kar rek – yuh kant help buht look. Yew kd see thuh rayn ihniht, nawt fawlihn yet, buht held ihnsid. Yuh kd juhs look adiht, an see that weniht buhst opihn, ihwuhz guhnuh beeuh heluhvuh bangur.

Awl uhs kihds wur ihgsidihd, sihlee az hefurz ihn march. Eevihn Skawt an Greguree, hew wur old uhnuhf tuh hayt beeihn kawld kihdz. Suhpur wuhz livleer then yewzhuhwul, an wee dihdn seem tuh mind how kwihklee ar playts gawdemptee. An aftur

suhpur wee awl wen outsid, uhs kihdz playihn tag an muhmuh an dad sihtihn awn thuh porch, an awluhvuhs wawchihn thuh ski, maykihn shur thuh klowd wuhz stihl hedihn for uhs. Shiht. I kant uhmajihn wuhdiht wooduh duhn tewuhs ihf that klowd uhd juhs trakt awfuh biht tuhthuh south an mihst uhs. Wee wur triihn tuh keep kawm, buht yuh kd awlmos heer uhs awl thihnkihn kuhmawn, kuhmawn, keep kuhmihn, rit heer, kuhmawn, weer waytihn for yuh. Kdn help buht uhmajihn wuht ihdfelt lik, thuh rayn peltihn down awn yuh, so kewul an so wet.

Buhdiht dihdn mewv awf, iht kep kuhmihn, strayt for uhs, buhdiht wuhz uh biht dihseevihn kuhz iht lookt so klos, wen iht muhstuh stihl bihn far awf. Wuhz thuh onlee thihng ihn thuh ski, so maybee thats wuht fewuld uhs. Wee waydihd awl eevnihn an that storm took ihts on sweet tim. Bi thuh tim Muhmuh uhz aftur mee uhbout bedtim iht stihl hadn shown uhp.

Evenchuhlee wee awl gawt tuh bed, eevihn muhmuh an dad, an iht muhstuh bihn reeyul layt at nit wen that klowd buhst. Muhstuh bihn rit ovurtawpuh uhs wen iht brok. Thur wuhz thihs krakuh thuhndur so lowd iht sownihd lik uh hors kihkihn threw uh stawl dor. Lowd uhnuhf soz iht wok uhp evreewuhn ihn thuh hous, I ihgspekt.

I kdn bee ihgspektuhd tuh sleep wihth awl that goihn awn. No way. I new I shd stay ihn bed an I new muhmuh wood skihn mew for iht, buhdI hadtuh get outsid, I hadtuh get out thair splashihn ihn that rayn. Bi thuh sekihn krashuh thuhndr I wuhz awlredee downstairz, an az I gawd outsid thuh blewihst forkuh litnihn I evur seen lihduhp thuh nit az brit az day.

Then thuh rayn stardiht.

Yew kd heer iht hihtihn thuh grown, theez bihg hevee drawps powndihn thuh hardpan lik hamurz. An ihts nawt lik iht bihlt uhp ovur tim, eethur. Dihdn drihzt furst buhfor getihn goihn, lik mos stormz dew. Iht juhs went bewm lik that wihth that thuhndur an ledur go. Thuh drawps wur hevee az kordrz an worm az pihs. Sekt mee threw ihnuh sekihn, buht iht wuhz so dam good tuh feeul that moyschur. Dont thihnk iht rihlee kewuld mee awf enee, iht juhs felt good tuh bee that – drencht. So thair I wuhz, ruhnihn ihn surkulz awn thuh spawt wair ar fruhnt lawn wooduh bihn ihn yeerz wee had uhnuhf wawdur. That yeer ihwuhz baysihklee uh pachuh durt, saym az evreewair els. Thuh thuhndurz goihn awf lik kanuhnz an thuh litnihnz lik bawmz, an mi puhjamuhz wur stihkihn tuh mee, an Im wewpihn an skreemihn blew murdur an juhs havihn muhself uh heluhvuh tim – an woodihnehuh no iht buht thairz muhmuh standihn out awn thuh fruhnt porch. I kd seer bi thuh litnihn, ihnur wit nitdres, holdihn iht down uhgihnst thuh wihnd. Sheez hawlurihn at meeduh ged ihnsid, get ihnsid rit thihs ihnstihnt, an I no sheez getihn mor an mor piht kuhz sheez getihn sekt tew buht I juhs dihdn no enee bedur. I had tuh bee out thair, juhs ruhnihn uhrown.

Fuhnee, rihlee. Suhchuh dam fewul thihng tuh dew, kduh bihn blastihd bi litnihn, buhdiht wuhz juhs so dam fuhn. Kors thuh stewpihdihst thihngz yewzhuhlee ar. An I keep ruhnihn uhrown, pihnweelihn mi armz, an then I heer muhm kawlihn fur muh dad, nawt fur mee, an I see heez thair awnthuh porch tew an ihf shee sihkt hihm awn mee then thurd bee heltuhpay. I dihdn kair how muhchuh mi hid muh old man took eethur, kuhz ihf I kdnt siht down furuh muhnth iht stihl wooduh bihn wurth iht. I heer muh muhthur yel adihm tuh kuhm get mee, that Id kech muh deth ihn that rayn, an muh dad barks suhmthihn at mee buhdI I duhno wuhdeez sayihn kuhz awl I heer ihz rayn an thuhndur.

BuhdI look ovur muh sholdur an I seeihm kuhmihn awf thuh steps an heez ruhnihn fur mee an I aynt seen muh dad ruhn buhfor that, nawt uhnless suhmthihn wuhz awn fir, so I no Im uhp krap rihvur wihthuh tewthpihk fur an or, an heez kuhmihn strayt for mee an so I tayk awf ruhnihn eevihn fastur, skairduh wuhdeez guhnuh dewduh mee. An awl mi bruhthurz an sihsturz ar wihth muhmuh oudawn thuh porch now an thair hawlurihn at mee, aygihn mee awn, ruhn, Jayk, ruhn! Nawt kuhz thay thihnk Im guhnuh akchuhlee ged uhway, juhs kuhz wenee duhz kech mee thay wawnuh see mee get thuh reeyul wuhtfor.

An I turnuh wid surkuhl wihth Dad chaysihn mee, an Im pulihn uhway fruhm ihm furuh biht kuhz I gawt bedur trakshuhn. Hihz feedar drivihn ihntuh thuh yard, turnihn wuhts leftuhviht ihntuh muhd, an Im sortuh lafihn kuhz I thihnk maybee heez guhnuh fawl, an I kant uhmajihn mi ol man goihn as ovur tee kedul ihn thuh mihduluhthuh nit. Wel now that gets mee lafihn fur reeyul an yuh kant ruhn wurth shiht ihf yur lafihn so hee klozihz ihn awn mee so fast hee juhs slamz ihntuh mee an wee both slihp ihn thuh muhd an damd ihf wee dont *both* go as ovur tee kedul, thuh both uhvuhs. An buhfor I kn eevihn kech mi breth thuh ol man reechihz ovur, gathurz uhpuh hanfuluh mi puhjamuh tawp, an stanz uhp. Pihks mee kleeer uhp awf thuh grown, holdz mee rit ihnfruhnuh hihz fays.

Shiht! I wuhz fuhkihn tairuhfid. I meen hee wuhz breethihn so hardihz cheeks wur puhfihn out, anihz iz wur nairod downtuh slihts. I thawdee wuhz guhnuh kihl mee, rit thair ihnfruhnuh muhmuh an muh sihsturz an gawd an evreewuhn. An thenee lawksihz iz awntuh min an putsihz fays so klos tuh min ar forhedz ar tuhchihn an thenee sez “yur iht!” Wulee drawps mee down an tayks awf – hel, I wuhz so stuhnd I muhstuh gihvihnihm uh tenur twelv step hedstart. An thairee ihz, tairihn awf uhkraws thuh yard

wihth mee afturihm, an muhmuh yelihn aduhs tuh stawp iht rit thihs ihnstihnt, an thuh uhthur kihdz ar hewtihn an kaireeihn awn, an pridee soon thair awl ihn thuh gaym tew. Evreewuhnuhuhs wuhz muhd fruhm hedtuhfoot, sept fur Lewkuhs, kuhz hee wuhz onlee forur so at thuh tim, an muhmuhd kep uh holduh hihm uhp awn thuh porch.

Skawt an Grayg, thay teemd uhp uhgihnst dad, an stardihd slihnghn klawdzuh muhd adihm, an thay wur peltihnihm prihdee good, tew, so hee ruhonz ovur an hoysts mee uhp ihnfruhnuh hihm, yewzihn mee azuh sheeuld, an Im lafihn an heez lafihn an thuh onlee wuhn hew ihzihnt ihz muhmuh an sheez hawlurihn at dad tuh put mee down buhfor I get hurt. Wel finlee iht seemz lik heez lihsnihn kuhz hee kawls uhs awl awf. An iht tayks uh wiul kuhz weer so wownd uhp buhd eevenchuhlee wee kwiht slihnghn muhd at eech uhthur an lihsihnd tewihm. Gawd, wee muhstuh looktuh sit, thuh hol famlee kuhvurd hed tuh to ihn muhd thihk az frawstihng awnuyh kayak, anthuh rayn peltihn down lik thuh skiz meltihn.

Dad looks reeyul sihreeuhs adawl uhvuhs, an then sez “Yur muhthurz rit. Lookiht uhs! Sheezuh saynt fur putihn uhp wihth thuh licksuh uhs. Now nawk awf thihs horsplay an go gihv yur muhthur uh huhg.” An thenee gihvz uhs thihs reeyul bihg wihtk soz wew awl no wuht tuh dew. An muhmuh seez iht tew, an shee shrieks oudihz naym buhdihts tew layt an heez gawdur ihnuh bair huhg an sheez kihkihn an triihn tuh swat adihm buhdeez gawdur armz pihnd an awluhs kihdz gathurd rown an gayvur thihs bihg skweez. An muhmuhz triihn tuh bee mad, kuhz weer awl so muhdee an sheez ihnur best nitdres buht shee kant rihlee bee angree kuhz ihts raynihn lik yuh woodihn buhleev an weer awl so hapee, an eevenchuhlee shee starts lafihnubhiht tew, an dad gihvzuruh kihs awn thuh cheek, an iht leevzuh bihg smeer kuhzeez gawt so muhch muhd awnihm.

Thuh stormud alredee stardiht playihn out bi then, thuh rayn wuhz letihn uhp an thuh thuhndur wuhz kwiihdur tew. Wee awl trampt ihnsid, muhmuh wureeihn uhbout uhs mesihn uhpur florz, an damd ihf gramuh wuhdihn uhp. Standihn at thuh enduh thuh tawpuh thuh stairz, lookihn downaduhs wiht them steelee izuh hurz, an eevihn Pawp lowurdihz hed fur shaym, buht shee dihdn eevihn say nuhthihn. Juhs lookt aduhs awl sawpihn wet an then gawt suhm ol towulz ouduh thuh klawziht, an gihvm tew uhs rit thair at thuh dor. Wee awl wipt awf rit thair, an muhmuh wen ihtuh hur bedrewm an chaynjd ihtuh suhmthihn kleen, an gawduhs awluh chaynjuh kloz. Mayduhs chaynj rit thair, an pudawl thuh durdee kloz ovur thuh porch rayul. Shee eevihn mayduhp uh pawduh tee, an wee awl had suhm buhfor goihn bak uhp tuh bed.

Nuhnuh uhs wok uhp tihl gramuh kawld uhptuh uhs. Eevihn muhmuh an dad wur stiht ihn bed, so wee awl sortuh gawt tuh thuh taybul at thuh saym tim. Yew shduh seen thuh spred gramuhd layd out. Thair wuhz tost an jam, aygz an baykihn, uh stakuh pankayks az bihg az yur hed, an sheed eevihn duhguhp suhm maypul seeruhp fruhm suhmwairz. I no iht mit nawt sown lik muhch, buht wee hadn seen that muhch fewd ihnuh hol day furuh lawng tim, so seeihniht awl layd out thair lik that at wuhns – ihwuhz lik krihsmuhs. I kd see bi muhmuhz fays that shee thawdiht wuhz tew ihkstravuhgiht, buhdihnsteduh sayihn suhmthihn lik I thawt shee wood shee juhs pudawnuh smiul. I ges shee fihgurd sihns thuh fewd wuhz alredee kookt, thur wuhzn no putihn iht bak ihn thuh pantree. Spihlt mihlk, an awl that, ay. Wel wee duhg ihn an ayt tihl wee buhstihd – wiich dihdn tayk tew lawng, kuhz ar stuhmihks wur shruhnk down fruhm goihn so lawng awn hafuh meeuluh day. Wee wur almos awl sihk awfiht. That maypul seeruhp wuhz so sweet iht mayd muh stuhmihk dewuh beleeflawp soonziht hiht muh tuhng.

Aftur weed et, awl uhs kihdz wen outsid. Pawp wen out tuh thuh feeyuldz, I spoz juhstuh see ihf eneethihn had shawt uhp wihth thuh rayn. Kors iht hadn, yew kd see thuh duhst startihn tuh kihk uhp awlrede. Thuh feeyuldz wur so dri thuh wawdur juhs suhkt ihn, an bi mihdday thay wur no bedur awf then buhfor.

Muhmuhz gardihn, tho, thawuhzuh dihfriht storee. Ihwuhz lik suhmwuhnuhd pihkt uhp ar hous an mewvd iht ovurnit tew thuther siduh pairuhdis. Thurd bihn pachihzuh groth ihn thuh gardihn awl uhlawng, rayn ur no. Hur puhdayduhz dihd okay, anur peez wur thair, an suhm kairuhts, buht nawt muhch els. An yuh woodn buhleev thuh chaynj that hapihnd ihnuh few owurz.

Now nuhthihn kduh brawt that gardihn bak ful. Wuhdn lik wen wee wawkt outsid ihwuhz korn ten feet hi, suhnflowurz blawkihn out thuh suhn, an rozihz az bihg uhrown az thuh bihfee houl. Iht wuhdn evur guhnuh bee green fens tuh fens. Thuh ded spawts wur stihl ded. Wuhz juhs thuh lihvihn spawts kuhm trewlee uhliv. Hur tuhmayduhz went fruhm apulgreen tuh chaireered. Ihf yuh splihdopihn uh pawd thuh peez wur thuh sizuh yur nuhkulz, ihnsteduh bawlbairihngz. Eneethihn that had suhm lif ihniht juhs suhkt uhp that raynwawdur fur awl ihwuhz wurth.

An shur, thuh korn mit nawduh beet mee fur hit, buht thihngz dihd gro uh hafseezihnz wurth ovurnit. Iht wuhznt tihl thuh afturnoon that I spent enee tim ihn thuh gardihn. Awn wuhnuh mi laps uhrown thuh hous – dont ruhmembur ihf I wuhz beeihn chayst bi wuhnuh thuh oldur kihdz ur chaysihn wuhnuh thuh yuhngur wuhn. Eneewayz, muhm kawlz mee ovur duh helpur pihk peez fur suhpur. I wuhzn ovurlee pleezd uhbout that – thuh hol day no wuhnuhd gihv mee uh sihngul chor. Buht muhmuhd bihn wurkihn awl day, so I kdn win tew muhch. Muhmuh awlwayz had thuh wurst neezyuh kd

uhmajihn – theez dayz Im shur sheeduh gawt that arthurskawpihk surjree, buht bak then yuh juhs mayd dew wihth wuht gawd gihv yuh. Evree tim shee pihktuh spawt kleen an gawt uhp tuh mewv ovur both hur neez wood go awf lik tweneetewz an sheed mayk theez lihdl ew sownz. Mor awfihn then nawt sheed presur hanz tuh thuh smawluh hur bak tew. Muhstuh bihn paynihn hur suhmthihn feers wuht wihthr huhnchihn ovur hur gardihn awl day. Nevur seduh wurd uhboudiht tuh eneewuhn, tho, juhs kaireed awn.

Wihth hur beeyihn ihn so muhch payn I prawblee shduh thawt buhfor askihnur tuh geduhp uhgihn, buhdI wuhz juhs stuhk awn wuhdId seen. Muhmuh wuhz prawblee twenee feet fruhm mee, uhbout for roz uhp an awl thuh wayduh thuh uhthur end. I wuhz prihdee klos tuh thuh hous stihl, wair thuh grown wuhz akchuhlee stihl uh biht wet – nawt muhd, buhdihf yuh duhg yur han ihtuh thuh grownd thuh durtuhd stihktewiht. That wuhn rouh peez I wuhz pihkihn at wuhz prihtneer tuh thuh ejuh thuh eevz, wur awl thuh wawdur fruhm thuh rewf ran awf. That bihduh grown gawduh hol lawduh wawdur, eevihn mor then iht kd handl. Awl them seedz muhmuhd planihd, leest thuh wuhn down deep uhnuhf soz thuh burdz kdnt dihgihm uhp, thay wuhz juhs hidihn down thair waytihn fur suhm nurihshmihnt. An wen thay gawdiht, thay juhs sprang uhp uhlawng wihth eneethihn els thawuhz lurkihn uhndurgrown.

Buhind wair I wuhz pihkihn I saw thihs brit green stawk. Muhstuh bihn dam neer tew feet hi, an az thihk rown az mi bihg to. Kdn buhleev iht – thair miduhbihn uh bihduh green thair uh day buhfor, buht nuhthihn tawlurihnuh blayduh gras. Id swairduh that. An then ihn thihs wuhn rayn, suhmthihnuhd shawduhp pas muh nee. Id nevur seen suhchuh thihng. Kdn buhleev eneethihn kd gro suh fast. So wen I kawld muhmuh ovur I dihdn thihnkuh hur aykihn neez orur bak, I juhs wawnuhd hurduh kuhm ovur furuh sekihn.

Kant blaymur fur nawt beeyihn thrihld uhboudiht – sheed juhs sedurself down uhgen, so at furs awl shee dihd wuhz say “Wuhdihziht, Jayk?” an dihdn mewv adawl. I juhs ruhpeedihd muhself, an sed “Muhmuh, kuhm taykuh lookiht thihs!” Shee gayv uhp uh bihg si, buht shee gawdurself uhp an shuhfuld ovur.

Shee lookt down at wair I wuhz poyntihn. I wuhz morihnuh biht suhprizd that shee dihdn say nuhthihn, so I sed suhmthihn lik “Look how bihg that gawt!” I duhno. Awluhvuhshuhdihn iht dihdn seem lik suhchuh bihg deeul aftur awl. Awl muhmuh sed wuhz “Hm. That dihd gro kwihklee” an went bak tuh pikhihn. I no mi dad wooduh gawdiht. Mit nawduh bihn az ihgsitihd uhboudiht az I wuhz, buht hee wooduh seen that tew feetuh groth ihnuh haf duhzihn owrz wuhz suhmthihn prihdee spektakyuhlur. Hee wooduh at leest sed suhmthihn lik “Wow. Look how that thair shawduhp” ur “Holee juhmpduh – wihsh muh weet wuhz dewihn that wel.” That “holee juhmpduh” thihng hee sed. Duhno wair iht kuhm fruhm, buhdee sed iht awl thuh tim uhrownduhs kihdz, ihnsteduh kuhsihn. An eevihn ihfee dihdn say nuhthihn atleest hee wooduh muhst uhp muh hair, an kaireed awn. Mee an hihm awlwayz saw thihngz ihn thuh saym way.

Aftur that I sorduh kep mi i awniht. Thuh downporuhd fihld uhp awl thuh raynbairulz an I no muhmuh eevihn yewzd thuh wawdur thatuhd kuhlektiht ihn thuh trawf – wee hadn had enee anihmulz fur thuh bedur parduh tew yearz. Dad hadn eevihn bihn aybul tuh keepuh sihnguht hors, an thuh kowz uhd bihn sold awf maybee fiv yearz buhforhan, sep furuh kuhpuluh old mihlkurz. Thair wuhdn enee yews eevihn triihn tuh ruhviv thuh feeyuldz, so awl thuh wawdur wee had went tuh muhmuh. Kors iht wood onlee last fur so lawng, kuhz wuht shee dihdn yewz wood juhs get drid uhp bi thuh suhn.

Ihn les thenuh muhnth awl ar bairulz wur down tuh nuhthihn uhgihn, buht muhmuh mayd thuh mostuhviht.

Wee stihl woodntuh mayd iht thru thuh wihnur wihtout thuh dol, buht furuh biht that suhmur wee ayt tew meeulz uhgen, an muhmuh stihl manihjd tuh put uh lihdl ihtuh thuh pantree. Shee kokst uh lihdl ouduh evreethihn out thair, buht mi uhtenshuhn dihdn stray fruhm that wuhn plant thuh hol suhmur. An fur good reezuhn, rihlee, kuhz iht grew lik yew woodn buhleev. Uh week laydur ih wuhz az tawl az mee, anuh week aftur that I kdn tuhch thuh tawpuhv iht eevihn ihf I juhmpt. Iht prawblee endihd uhp beeihn lik ten ur uhlevihn feet.

Krist, aftur uh few weeks eevihn muhmuh wuhz prowduh that thihng – an shee wuhdihnuh prowduh wumihn, normuhlee. Shee eevihn gawt Tawm Mihchul, thuh newzpaypur man, tuh kuhm out. Kors wee hadn haduh paypur fur yeerz eethur, wuhz juhs mihstur Mihchuhl haduh kamruh. Muhmuh wawnihduh pihchuruh that plant. Miduh bihn thuh tawlihst thihng groihn ihn thuh hol prawvihns that yeer. An yuhno, I don ruhmembur wuht thuh hel iht wuhz. Iv gawt no urthlee ideeuh. I swair ihwuhz juhs suhm kinduh weed, suhmthihn that wee prawblee shduh juhs rihpt ouduh thuh grown. Buht weed ur nawt, muhmuh had mihstur Mihchuhl seduhpihz kamruh ihn thuh gardihn, an gawt mee an Burnees tuh stand holdihn hanz uhrowndiht, juhs so yuh kd see how bihg ihwuhz cuhmpaird tewuhs. Burnees, sheez stihl gawt thuh pihchur – shee sez ihts gawduh bee hawleehawk, kuhzuh thuh leevz. Buht weev both hurd maybe ihtsuh suhnflowur, ur eevihn korn. Buhdiht aynt. Muhmuhz korn dihdn kuhm uhp that yeer, an thay wur way ovur awn thuhthur siduh thuh gardihn eneehow. I don ruhkawh hur evur rayzihn suhnflowurz. An hawleehawks? I duhno wuht thuh ol gurlz thihnkihn. That gardihn

wuhzn fur dekuhrayshuhn – ihwuhz suhmthihn tuh keep uhs uhliv. Thair wuhdn rewm fur suhmthihn az yewслиs az hawleehawk. Evur. Wuhz awl muhmuh kd dew tuh juhstuhfi eevihnuh drawpuh wawdur furur rozihz that yeer, so shee surtuhnlee woodihnuh waystihd enee fur suhmthihn az uhglee azuh hawleehawk. Shee nevur planihd enee suhch thihng – mit seemuh biht stewpihd tuh tihpur wawdurihn kan ovuruh weed, buhdI thihnk wuhns iht poktuhp fruhm thuh soyul muhmuh dihdn hav thuh hart tuh lediht di. Dyuh get wuht I meen? Iht dihdn madr thadiht wuhz juhstuh weed. So lawng aziht wuhz green an helthee, muhmuh wuhz guhnuh keep iht uhliv.

An iht wuhdn lik muhmuh wuhz thuh onlee wuhn. Hol buhnchuh foks kn telyuh bout thihsuhl sewp. Wuhdn that bad furuhs, buht muhmuh wuhdn uhhout tuh uhprewt eneethihn that kd grow that yeer. So lik I say, iht gawt wawdurd an grew tawlur then thuh kewp. Eevihn ihf iht wuhz juhstuh weed, ihwuhz prihdee damd ihmpresihv. I meen kn yew buhleev iht – uhlevihn, twelv foot hi ihnuh kuhpuluh weeks? Dihd ar harts good, tuh see suhmthihn hav so muhch lif ihniht. So maybe yuh kant blaymur fur dresihn mee an Burnees uhp ihn ar suhnday best fur that pihchur. Kinduh fuhnee, lookihn bak adiht. Thuh onlee tim muhmuh evur bawthurd getihn uh muhmento uhvur gardihn wuhzn furur priz rozihz, ihwuhz fruhmuh yeer wen nuhthihn grew, sep that wuhn fuhkihn weed.

Buhdihwuhz rihlee sorduh thuh hilit uh that suhmur. Ur at leest enee uhthur suhmur an that wooduh bihn thuh onlee thihng tuh ruhmembur. Buht that yeer wuhz also thuh suhmuruh thuh Gost.

Gost. Jeezuhz. Hee wuhzuh raygyuhlur lejihnd fur enee kihd wair wee lihvd. Weed awl hurduh hihm. Evreewuhn had. Gost wuhz thuh kinduh gi hew ihf yuh sawihm ihn town yur muhthur wood pulyuh tuh thuh uhthur siduh thuh street. Evreewuhn new uh

haf duhzihn storeez uhboudihm. Dihdn eevihn noihz reeyul naym, uhthur then tuh kawlihm Gost Rihngwood, buht wee new evreethihn els yew kd no. Gawsihp spred uhkraws thuh skewulyard, went fruhm pew duh pew at church, gawt tost rownd bi thuh men at thuh genrul stor. So eevihn az an ayt yeer old I new heed haduh fawlihn out wihthihz dad wenee wuhzuh yuhng man, an endihd uhp getn tawst awf thur farm an ouduh thuh famlee. Endihd uhp goihn awf tuh Frans ihn thuh grayt wor. Wenee kuhm bak hee stayd out eest tuh find wurk. Ovr thuh yeerz heed bihlt suhmuh thuh rodz uhp north ihn awntaireeo, threw awl that ruhf grown an rawk. Eevihn wurkt azuh dinuhmidur fur uhwiul, an how hee maydiht uhliw threw that Il nevur no. Theneed mewvd ovur duh kwihbek, an fown wurk azuh lawgur, thoe also dihd suhm farmhand wurk evree wuhns ihnuh wiul. Mostuh thuh tim wen wihnur kuhm rown, ihfee dihdn hav no luhk findihn suhmthihn tuh dew heed eevenchuhlee maykihz way bak hom. Yewd kech glihmpsiuh uh hihmihn town. Nevur sawihm ihn church awn suhnday mornihns, tho. Wurd wuhzeed fel ouduh thuh church saym tim az heed fel ouduh hihz fathurz fayvur. Hee wuhz non tuh drihmk morihn maybee wuhz uhkseptihd bi puhlit suhsiihdee, an wee awl fihgurd hee wuhz wuhn fur hewurihn, speshlee wihth hafbreedz ur ihndeeuhnz. Anee had langwihj blew uhnuhf tuh strihp thuh paynt awfuh kadihlak. Hee dihdn thihnk nuhthihn uhv iht, tuh yewz wurdz ihnfruhnuh thuh mihnihsturz muhthr that wooduh mayd thuh blaksmihth blink twis. Nawt that yuh kd blaymihm – heed baysihklee gron uhp ihn lawgihn kamps, an I dout thay wur thuh best plays tuh lurn thuh soshul graysihz. Hee wuhz tawt tuh beeuh ruhf sorduh man fruhm wenee wuhs juhstuh boy. Drank bihg, tawkt bihg, lihvd bihg. Yuh kn see wi weed tawk uhboudihm.

Jeezuhz. Wen I wuhzuh kihd I wooduh gihvihn eneethhin tuh bee Gost Rihngwood.

Wuhz buhfor mi tim, buhdI ges wuhns hee went sihks strayt yearz wihthout kuhmihn bak hom. An yuh no ihn thoz yearz hihz fawthur did an Gost dihdn eevihn kuhm bak fur thuh fyewnuruhl. Thayd sent wurd out tewihm, anuh kors yuh kdn bee shureed hurd, buhhihz hol famlee prihdee muhch turnd thur baks awnihm then an thair. Nawdihz oldihst sihstur, Leweez, tho. Shee awlwayz kepur hart opihn tewihm. Wuhz awd tew, kuhz shee wuhz suhchuh holee rolur yewduh thuhnk shee wooduh bihn thuh first wuhn tuh kuht thuh tiz wihthihm. Then uhgihn, yuh nevir no. Prawblee had thuh parduh hur bibl that telz uhbout thuh prawdihgul suhn worn kuhmpleetlee out.

Enuhwayz, aftur beeihn gawn fur hew noz how lawng, awluhvuhshuhdihn Gost juhs turnz uhp. Rit ouduh thuh blew. Dihdn senduh ledurur eneethihn, juhs shoz uhp wuhn day, hihz fays shayvd kleen, wihch wuhz uhnewzhuhwul furuh man then. Dihdn hav so muhch azuh muhstash, buhdihz hair wuhz reeyul lawng, likan ihndeeuhnz almos, ihgsep nawt so strayt. Prihdee sewn wurd gawt rown thadeed kuhm hom fur mor then juhs tuh mayk soshul kawlz, ur tuh mayk uhp wihthihz famlee. Wurd wuhz that heed gawt suhm french gurl ihnthuh famlee way. Nawt so suhprizihnlee thuh gurlz fawthur wuhdnt tew thrihld wihth thuh ideeuh, anee ihnsihstihd that Gost dew thuh manlee thihng. Way I hurdiht hee took awf aftur Gost wihthuh shawtguhn, bent awn mairihj or els. Wel I ges Gost took thuh or els, an fihgurd uh vihziht hom wuhz pruhfuruhibul tuh getihnihz as fihld wihth shawt.

Yuhd thihnk wihth awl them storeez yuhd look down awn Gost – wuhzn likee wuhz thuh graydihst uh roul mawdulz fur uhs kihdz, buht wee awl had thihs

fasihnayshuhn wihthihm. Nuhnuhvuhs wawnihd tuh bee lik ar dadz, fitihn with bindurz an triihn tuh eek ouduh lihvihn buhtween dihzasturz. Mihlkihn bi sihks, ur urleeur, an nawt getihn yur day duhn uhntil aftur suhnset. Wurkihn dayihn an dayout awn thuh farm, eevihn tho wee new thats morihnlíklee wuht weed end uhp dewihn. An thuh onlee men wee new hew wurihnt farmurz wur thuh preests, an preests ihn them dayz thawduh bayk sayul wuhz prihdee ihgsitihn, so wee kd hardlee look tuh them eethur. Nop, fur enee ihgsitmihnt yuh hadtuh look tuh peepul lik thuh Gost. Hee kd speek french, ahnuh bihduh kree, ur wuhnuh them ihndeeyuhn langwihjihz. Thuh furthihst Id evur bihn ihn muh lif wuhz tuh town, an heerz thihs man thatuhd akchuhlee gawn klee out tuh kwihbek.

So wen I sawihm that suhmur, ihts no wuhndur mi hart beeduh lihdl kwihkur. Kwihkur, hel. Ihwuhz goihn likuh fawks afturuh sihkslaygihd rabiht. Weed kuhn ihtuh town that day, I duhno wi, juhs kuhz wee had thuh awpurtewnuhdee, I ges. Thuh naybur tuh thuh westuh uhs, Sam Ocawnur, wuhz goihnihn, an noihn wee dihdn keep ar own horsihz eneemor, hee stawpt awf tuh see ihf wee wawnihduh rid ihn, eevihn tho ihwuhz cuhmpleetlee thuh rawng way tuh cuhm geduhs. Kant fur thuh lifuh mee ruhmembur wuht reezihn wee had fur goihn ihn, kuhz mi dad dihdn eevihn go ihn, hee juhs sent muhmuh, an sihns thur wuhz rewm uhnuhf fur uhnuhthur pursuhn I ast kd I go. Fihgurd sheed say no, yur dad needzyuh, ur no yuh gawduh wawch yur sihsturs, fur no uthur reezihn then puhnihshmihnt fur that nidout ihn thuh rayn. Buht shee suhprizd mee. Let mee klim awn uhp buhtween hur an mihstur Ocawnur.

Fruhm ar plays iht wuhzn uh reeyul lawng rid, boudan owur anuh haf urso, an iht flew bi fur mee, kuhz ihwuhz thuh most ihgsitihn thihng thatuhd hapihnd sihns thuh rayn – o! Thatz wuhdiht wuhz, Muhmuhd ment tuh sel suhmuh hur vejeez, kuhz thayd gron so

muhch. Maybee suhmuh hur rozihz, ihf eneewuhn ihn town had enee ekstruh muhneeduh spair. Yuhno thats how sheed payd mihstur Mihchul fur taykihn thuh pihchur, bi gihvihnihmuh hol bushuh rozihz – rihptiht ouduh thuh grown so hee kd planiht ihnihz on bak yard. Thats wi shee wuhz goihn ihn tho – pihktuh kuhpuluh baskihts ouduh hur gardihn an threwihm ihn thuh bakuh thuh wagihn.

Wuhdn muhch tuh dew ihn town, buhdiht wuhz beduruhn spendihn uhnuhthur day at hom, cowntihn fliz ur teezihn mi sihstur. Fihgurd at thuh leest I kd wawk rownduh biht, maybee meet suhm kihdz tuh play wiht ur suhmthihn. Mihstur Ocawnur had suhm bihznihs ihn at thuh bank. Duhno ihfee wuhz putn suhmthihn tuhword wuhnuhthuh layt morgihj payments ur pleediht forihm nawt tuh forkloz. Weed hardlee gawdawntuh mayn street buhfor muhmuh awluhvuh suhdihn saduhp reeyul strayt. I kd seeur iz wur lawkt awntuh suhmthihn down thuh street. I tookuh look, an damd ih Gost wuhzn standihn outsid thuh fruhnuh mihstur Luhcrawsihz stor, chatihn wiht suhmwuhn. Id seenihm buhfor, buht dihdnt noihz naym. Wuhz uh huhngaireeyuhn I thihnk. Thuh uhthur gi, I meen. Maybee uh polak. Lihvd out westuh town thurdeefiv, fordee miyulz. Dihdn rihlee look at hiht muhch tho. Mi iz wur glewd tuh thuh Gost. Bekuhz I wuhz lookihn adihm so hard I saw wen hihz iz kuhm uhp. Hee gawduh kinduh puhzuld look awnihz fays – at thuh tim I dihdn no wi, buhdI ges hee wuhz wuhndriht wi mi muhthur an Samyuwul Ocawnur wur ridihn tuhgethur. Az wee past bi hee wuhz stihl tawkiht wiht thuh huhngaireeyuhn, buhdee wuhz payihn mor uhtenshuhn tewuhs. Hihz iz wur awn uhs, an as wee went bi hee gihvuhs uh nawd huhlo. Mihstur Ocawnur nawdihd bak, buht muhmuh juhs staird strayt uhhd. Shee had theez gray iz, an they nevr eevihn flihkurd, juhs went lik ston ihnuh kreek. Shee lookt ded uhhd, an mayd shur mihstur

Ocawnur dihdn stawp uhntihl wee wur uhp at thuh bank. Hee wuhz suhprizd az hel that muhmuh dihdn wawnuh stawp at thuh stor aftur awl. Awl muhmuh wood say wuhz “Iv chaynjd mi mind. I thihnk weev nawt uhnuhf tuh spair. Thuh muhnee wood bee nis, buhdIl nawt hav mi chihldrihn go huhngree furuh few peneez.” Stuhburn azuh mewul, that wumihn, an mihstur Ocawnur new bedurihn tuh kweschuhnur. So hee juhs klimd down an wen ihtuh thuh bank. Mee an hihm wur both wuhndrihn wuht thuh hel wuhz goihn awn, kuhz stuhburn az shee wuhz, muhmuh wuhzn wuhn tuh chaynjur mind.

I stihl lookt adiht lik mi chans ihn town, an I stardiht tuh klim down awf thuh wagihn. Muhmuh lookt at mee lik Id stuk mi fihngur uhp mi noz, an wipt ihdawf awn mi slaks. “An juhs wair duh yew thihnk yur goihn?” Shee ast ihn that ton uh voys onlee muhthurz an teechorz gawt. I toldur I juhs wawnuhd tuh go look uhrown, buht shee wuhdnt havihn nuhnuhviht. Sed “Yewl dew no suhch thihng. Siht.” An so wee sat fur an owur wil mihstur Ocawnur fihnihsht uhpizh bihznihs. Wen hee kuhm out hee lookt down thuh street, whihchuhd empteed out uhwiul bak.

“Id pland tuh stawp awf at thuh genruhl yet, mam. Dihdee go ihn?” Muhmuh nawdihd – don no how shee new heed gawn ihn, kuhz sheed juhs sat lookihn strayt uhhed thuh hol tim. Maybee ihts trew, an muhthurz dew gro iz ihn thuh bakuh thur hedz. Shee wuhz rit, uhkors, Id wachtihm go ihn, anee hadnt kuhm out yet. Id bihn wawchihn hihm thuh hol tim, triihn tuh duhsid wihchuh thuh storeez Id hurd kduh bihn trew. Id hurd heed kihld uh feluh wuhns ihnuh fit, juhs kep hihtihn ihm uhntihlee wuhs ded. Id nevur rihlee buhleevd that wuhn buhfor – buht seeihnihm that day mayd mee think twis.

Eneeway, rewmur hadiht that ihf yew wur frenlee uhnuhf wihth Luhcraws heed pul ouduh bawduluh wihskee – I duhno ihf thats trew ur nawt, buhduh lawduh men mayd

shur tuh stawp awf thair, eevihn ihf maybee thay had awl thuh suhpliz thay needihd. Mihstur Ocawnur sorduh lookt down thuh street, bak at muhm, an sed, reel ruhlukhtuhntlee, "BuhdI spoZ that kn wayt fur uhnuhthur day."

Muhmuh juhs nawdihd, an Sam klimbd uhp slo azuh sihk preechur an grabd thuh raynz. Wee wur bak hom ihn an owuranuh haf. Muhmuh dihdn say uh wurd thuh hol way hom. I wuhz gihdee – kdn wayt tuh get hom an tel SkawtnGrayg that Id seen thuh Gost. An fur wuhns thay akchuhlee dihd lihsihn tuh mee ihnsteduh maykihn fuhnuh mee.

Ihwuhz thuh furs day hee wuhz bak, or thuh furs newz weed haduh hihm beeyihn bak, eneeway, so fur wuhns muh bruhthurz wur awl ovur mee wiht kweschuhnz. Thayd ask "wuhsee look lik?" an "wuhwuhzee dewihn?" an "dihdee say eneethihn?" Stuhf lik that. An I toldem evreethihn, eevihn stuhf thay new, kuhz thayd seenihm themselvz uhfew yearz buhfor, buhdI eevihn toldihm how tawlee wuhz, an that sortuh thihng. Kdn say muhch, kuhz fur awl thuh stairihn I dihd I rihlee dihdn tayk that gooduh lookadihm. Kdn tel them wuht kuhluruh slaksee hadawn, kuhz I kdnt tayk mi iz awfihz fays. Hee had theez brit blew iz that seemd tuh leep ouduh hihz hed, anee dihdn wairuh beard ur eevihn uh muhstash. Anihz hair wuhz brown anuh lawt lawngur then eneewuhn ihn town wor iht. Wuhz so lawng hee akchuhlee kep iht tid bak. So I went awnanawn uhboudihm tuh mi bruhthurz an thay lihsihnd furuh lawng tim – Id kuhm klosur tewihm then eneewuhn els ihn ar famlee evur had. Ur so I thawt, eneewayz.

Wel hel. I wuhz fiht tuh bee tid. That storm, that weed shewtihn uhp thurteen feet, an kechihn uh glihmposuh Gost Rihngwood. Saym suhmur. Them yearz wur prihdee spars awn enurtaynmuhnt, so awlredee I wuhz hapee azuh pihgihnshiht. An awl Id duhn wuhz seenihm awn thuh street. Ihwuhz fuhnee, thuh uhfect hee had awn awl uhs kihdz. Heed

bihn evreewair, an duhn evreethihng, an we awl wawnihd tuh bee lik hihm, buhdawl thuh saym, thur wuhz suhmthin uhboudihm that gawchuh reel nurvuhs. I duhno ihfiht wuhz thuh wayee lookt, ur ihf iht wuhz thuh way muhm awlwayz seemdtuh uhvoyd menchuhnihn hihz naym, lik yuh dew wihth thuh devuhl. Thur wuhz juhst suhmthihn uhboudihm that mayd yuh reeul uhneeze soonz yuh sawihm.

Wee gawt bak tuh ar plays rownd tew, three uhklawk. Rit awf muhmuh stardiht awn suhpur an I wen an fownd Skawt an Grayg.

Iht kdnuh bihn muhch aftur fiv uhklawk. Wee hadn et yet, an mee an Burnees wuhz playihn out awn thuh fruhnt porch – wuhz thuh onlee plays ouduh thuh suhn. Dont ruhmembur wuht wee wur playihn wihth, buht wee wur both huhnkurd down ihn fruhnuh thuh dor – thuh smelzuh suhpur flodiht ouduh thuh kihchihn an out thuh skreen dor, an wee dam neer chewd awn thuh air, wee wuhz so huhngree.

Burnees hurd iht furs. Shee bownsd uhp an down an sorduh yeld, shee wuhz so ihgsitiht. “Suhmwuhnz kuhmihn down thuh layn!” An I opihnd uhp muh eerz an shur uhnuhf yuh kd heer horsihz trawtihn uhp tuh thuh hous. Mee an Burnees both stood uhp at thuh tawpuh thuh stairz wachiht tew chesnuht brown mairz kuhm ruhmblihn uhp ar layn. Thay wur pulihn uh beniht buhgee, buht thuh wihnskreen wuhz so durdee wee kdn see hew wuhz drivihn. Puld rit uhp uhlawngsid thuh hous. Hee wuhz juhs uhrown thuh kornur drawihn wawdur furihz teem, buht wee kdn seeihm thair.

An then thairee wuhz, kuhmihn ihn thoz lawng stridzuh hihz. Gost wuhz wuhnuh thuh tawliht men I evur seen – muhstuh bihn lik sihks foot for, maybe sihks foot fiv eevihn. Muh fathur wuhz uhbout fiv ayt so Gost seemd likuh jiyuhnt. Eevihnihz feet ihn them bihg bewtsuh hihz seemd lawnguhz muh arm. Buhdee steps awn uhp tewuhs,

tihpzihz hat an sez "Howdee, pardnur. Eevnihn, mam." I wuhz stuhk duhm, buht Burnees gihguld – ihwuhdnt awfihn uh straynjur tawkt tewuhs lik wee wuhz gronuhps. Buht hee wuhzn stairihn at hur, neethur. Them izuh hihz wur lookihn skwair ihtnueh min, an thay wur sparklihn, lik hee wuhz lafihn at suhm jok I woodn get. I wuhz skaird shihtlihs. Awluh uhsuhdihn awl them storeez Id hurd seemduh biht tew reeyul. I ihmajihnd awl sortsuh thihngz. Lik mee goihn awf with Gost tuh them lawgihn kamps ihn kwihbek. How wuhz I guhnueh ever handul wuhnueh them bihg sawz? Wuhz I guhnueh haftuh lurn french? Kd I handl thur wihskee? Dihd I no uhnuhf swairz?

So heer I am, thihnkihn thihs, an then hee goz an stihksuh hand oudat mee. Lik heez guhnueh hawl mee awf rit then an thair. Shiht. I dam neer peed muhself rit thair ihnfruhnueh hihm. That rit handuh hihz haduh skar ruhnihn fruhm thuh fork buhtweenihz thuhm an forfihngur uhp for ihnchihz pastihz rihst. An hee haduhnuehthr wuhn uhp thuh siduh hihz han bi wair hihz ihz pihnkee fihngur shduh bihn thuht run kleeer pastihz elbo – duhno how far uhp, kuzihz shurtsleevz kd onlee roul uhp so far. Muhstuh bihn tew ihnchihz uhkraws, that bihg wuhn. Krist. Hee lookt lik uh mawnstur. Im suhprizd I dihdn juhs faynt ded uhway. I bedee dihdnt eevihn hav hafihz fihngurz left. Juhs thuh lookuh that hand kuhnvihnst mee thawuhz thuh hand heed kihld suhwuhn wihth. I thihnk Iduh ruhn sep Burneesuhd sorduh krowdihd ihn buhind mee, so I kdntuh bakt uhp eneeway. No wairduh go. An sheez nuhjihn mee lik Im an ihdeeyut, wihch uhkors I am, kuhz I dont see that awl heez triihn tuh dew ihz shayk muh han. Buht Gost dont let that stawpihm, hee juhs grabz muh han fruhm muh sid – that bihg mihduh hihz looks lik suhmwuhn sewd ihdawn, an iht juhs swawlowz uhp min an gihvz ihduh kuhpuluh puhmps. Mi iz muhstuh bihn az bihguh z dihnur playts.

“Lihsihn, pardnur” hee sez, “yur dadde hom?” anihz iz havihnt lef mee yet, so Im frozihn, kant mewv, kaneevihn tawk. I swawlod, an ihwuhz lik I wuhz swawloihn uh snayk sidwayz. Wuhdnno way I wuhz guhnuh say nuhthihn – an then Burnees sez “Jayk, yur sew stewpihd” lik sheez so brayv, buht shee aynt tawkihn tewihm neethur. Sted shee turnz uhrown an hawlurz ihtuh thuh hous. “Muhmuh! Uh manz heer!” An then shee goz ihnsid, shee juhs leevz mee thair wihthihm, wiht thuh Gost. Ihgsep shee don no hew ihdihz, hee aynt stairihn at hur, an weer awl uhlon an Im shur now heez guhnuh grab mee an ruhn. BuhdIm also triihn tuh fihgur out wi ihn thuh hel Gost Rihngwood wood bee askihn fur mi fawthur, ur wi ihn thuh hel uh man lik Gost eevihn noz hew mi fawthr ihz.

An then muhmuhz thair, an Im awl set tuh wrihgul ihn buhhindur an peek out fruhm buhind hur skurt eevihn tho Imuh lihdl tew bihg fur that. Buhd wuhzuh bihduhvuh muhmuhz boy then, an I wooduh hihd buhhindur, ihgsep shee puts hur hanz awn muh sholdurz, holdihn mee buhtween hihmanhur. Shee wuhz skweezihn ihm, tew, an I don thihnk shee new shee wuhz. Hurt, an I wawnuhd tuh skwurm ouduh hur grihp buhdI dihdn dair skwurm, nawt ihnfruhnuh uh man lik thuh Gost. Buhsidz, wuhns shee kuhn out hihz iz mewvd tuh hur, an ihn mi books I wuhz bedur awf wihth muhmuh skweezihn mee then hihm lookihn mee ded ihn thuh i uhgen.

“Helo, Wihl.” Hur voys wuhz awd, likeed juhs smashtur best wawdur pihchur ur suhmthihn.

“Huhlo, Lihlee,” hee sez bak, ihgsep sihns heed juhs gawt bak fruhm kwihbek iht sownihd mor lik “ah-low, Lihlay.” An wuht uhbout hihm kawlihnur Lihlee? I don no ihf Id evur hurd eneewuhn kawl mi muhthr biur krihschuhn naym. Dont no ihf I eevihn new shee haduh krihschuhn naym. Eevihn dad kawldur muhthur ihn fruhnuh uhs kihdz

mostuh thuh tim. An thuh few timz hee had yewzdur reeyul naym heed sed thuh ful verzhuhn, Lihleeyuhn. Gost noihn hur naym, an uhspeshlee kuhzee yewzduh short form, iht seemd rawng suhmhow. Iht struhk mee az awd – how wood Gost Rihngwood no mi muhthurz naym? An sheed kawldihm Wihl – wuhz thadihz reeyul naym? I ges I new Gost wuhdnihz gihvihn naym – no muhthuruhd look down adur lihdl baybee boy an gihv iht suhchuh naym, buhdiht suhprizd mee, mi muhmuh an hihm noihn eech uhthur lik thay awveeyuhslee dihd.

“Howuhv yuh bihn?” Hihz iz ar lookihn uhp adur, ihgsep now thay dont seem so fritnihn.

“Fin,” shee sez, an I nodihs shee dont askihm how hee ihz. Mi muhthur wuhzuh bair fur manurz, wuhz awlwayz preechihn aduhs kihdz tuh bee genulmen an laydeez. Haydihd tuh kechuhs kursihn. Fur hur nawt tuh ask aftur suhmwuhn, ihwuhz downrit rewd. Wuhnuh hur hanz lef muh sholdur an wuhz playihn wihth muh hair, smewthihn down awl thuh kowlihks, speshlee ihn bak. Shee hadn duhn thadihn yeerz, moslee kuhz I woodihn ledur. Furuh mihniht ihwuhz kuhmfurtihn, buht then I thawt maybee iht mayd mee look likuh baybee, an thawuhz suhmthihn I dihdn wawnt ihnfruhnuh Gost. Wihl. I kdn wayt tuh tel Grayg an Skawt. Jeezuhz, I akchuhlee newihz naym. Wihl. An Id tuhcht hihm, felt thuh skarz awnihz han. Thayd bee green. I kd pihchur them ihn thuh pawmzuh mi hanz awl ovur uhgihn. I kdn wayt fur muhmuh an Gost tuh say mor, kuhz then Id hav mor an mor tuh tel muh bruhthurz.

Anuh kors juhstaz Im thihnkihn that muhmuh sez tuh mee “Jayk, pleez fech yur fawthur.” Wen I dihdnt mewv shee ast “Yew no wairee ihz?” Hel ya, I new. Out reedewihn thuh fensihz uhgen – hadtuh rayzem uhgihn, thuh drihftihn wuhz suh bad.

Hihm, an Skawt an Grayguree. BuhdI dihdn say nuhthihn, ur mewv. Soonaz shee spok tuh mee thuh Gost izuhd flihkt awntuh mee uhgen, juhs lik buhfor, an froz mee tuh thuh spawt uhgen. “Wel?” Muhmuh ast, ihn that skewulteechur ton.

“Yes mam,” I sed. “Fensihn.” An I new shee wuhz ihgspektihn meeduh get goihn – buhd I kdnt. Kdn go down them stairz wihth thuh Gost standihn thair, waytihn awn mee. I kd see that handuh hihz reechihn outfur mee uhgen, an them teethuh hihz, yeluh azuh chinuhmuhn at dawn. An eevihn ihf I gawt bi ihm – wuhd uhbout muhmuh? Wuhwoodee dew tuh hur without mee thair?

“Jayk!” Muhmuh sed uhgen, reeyul sharp. “Get mewvihn.” I wuhdn thuh tipuh kihd hew dihdn mind hihz muhthur, buhdI stihl dihdn get mewvihn, eevihn tho I kd tel shee wuhz reeyul short tempurd, wihch wuhz uhnlik hur. Mi feet wur juhs stuhk. “March! Now!” Shee sed uhgen, an swadihd mee uh good wuhn awn thuh ars. Wel, that dihd iht. I kdn stand uhrown an bee spankt ihnfruhn thuh Gost. I marcht down them steps, muhmbuld “Skewz mee, sur” tuh muh shewz an then skweezd buhtween hihm an thuh rayul. Gawt so klos tewihm I kd smelihm – lik grees an smok. An then I juhs tewk awf, let mi feet go – ran az fast az I kd. I tol muhself ihwuhz tuh get dad az kwihk az I kd, thats wi I wuhz goihn suh fast, buht mi hart wuhz goihn likuh jakrabiht buhfor Id gawn ten steps – iht wuhz lik ruhnihn fur muh lif, uhway fruhm that bihg skard jiyuhnt uhvuh man.

I ran so fast I gawduh stihch ihn muh sid, buhdI kep awn ruhnihn eneewayz wihth mi arm klampt tuh mi sid an mi teeth griht. Muhstuh bihn morihnuh miyul out tuh wair dad wuhz, an iht kdnuh taykihn mee morihn uh cuhpuluh mihnihts tuh gedout thair. I

muhstuh seduh wurld rekurd. Juhs ran lik mi feet wuhz burnihn an I wuhz hedn furuh layk.

Kors then wen I gawdout thair I dihdn eevihn hav uhnuhf breth tuh say wi Id kuhm out ruhnihn suh fast. I kd tel dad wuhz wureed, an hee kep chekihn thuh ski ovur thuh hous an barn, az ihf ihgspektihn tuh see smok. Hel, ihf thuh hous wuhz awn fiur Iduh onlee gawn haf az kwihk. Hee juhs stood thair, waytihn awn meeduh get muh air bak. Wuhz awl I kd dew tuh stand thair, bent ovur wihth muh hanz awn muh neez. Finlee I manihjd tuh kinduh pant uhbiht buhtween breths wuht wuhz goihn awn. BuhdI dihdn wawnuh ledawn tuh SkawtnGrayg – kdn wayt tuh see thuh looks awn thur faysihz ihf thay kuhm ihn tuh see Gost sihtihn at thuh kihchihn taybul, havihnuh kuhpuh tee wihth muhm. So I suhkt ihn suhm wihnd an sed “thurzuh ... man ... heer ... tuh ... seeyuh Muhmuh ... kawldihm ... Wihl.”

Pawps iz pawpt opihn ihn suhpriz, an hee wipt at suhm duhst that gawdihn wuhn. Sed suhmthihn lik “Wel Il bee jihgurd. Wuht thuh hel ihz that suhnuhvuh bihch dewihn heer?” Onlee hee dihdn say iht lik hee wuhz mad, nawt rihlee. I wuhz suhprizd, kuhz Id bairlee evur hurd Dad say wurdz lik that uhnlles hee wuhz fyureeyuhs. Muhmuh haydihd iht wen hee spok lik that – lik I sed, shee wuhz awlwayz wuhn fur mindihn peez an kyewz. “Damiht, boy!” Dad sed, “lets get goihn!” Hee lookt bak at SkawtnGrayg an toldihm tuh fihnihsh uhp wihthoudihm. Thay prawblee lookt forwurd tewiht, kuhz wihthoudihm wawchihn thay kd prawblee slo down uhbiht. Mi fawthur wuhz wuhnuh thoz men that dont no nuhthihn buht wurk, an ihgspekt thuh saym fruhm evreewuhn els. Mee an Dad wawkt ihn, anee wuhz mewvihn fast – seemd prihdee eegur tuh go ihnuhn seeihm. I kep waytihn fur Dad tuh say suhmthihn, buhdee dihdn look likee wuhz guhnuh,

so eevenchuhlee I juhs kdn wayt no mor. So I blurdihd iht out. “Dad, ihz that man thuh Gost?” An then I sorduh wihsht I hadnt sed eneethihn kuhzee gawt thihs sortuh smiul awnihz fays, buht juhs lik wenee wuhz swairihn hee dihdn seem mad now thadee wuhz smilihn hee dihdn seem hapee. “Yesur. Gost Rihngwood. Howd yew heer uhboudihm?”

At furst awl I kd say wuhz “Uhmhhh.” I dihdn wawnuh say nuhthihn. Ihf I tol hihm enee uh thuh storeez GraygnSkawt tol mee, I new thayd get thuh wuhtfor, an then thayd taykihdout timz ten awn mee fur getihn them ihn truhbul. “I juhs hurd uhboudihm ihn town. Fruhm suhmuh thuh kihdz. Thay sed – thay sed heez bihn tuh kwuhbek, an thadee kn tawk ihndeeyuhn, an that –”

“Yew nevmind wuht yuh heer.” Dad kuht mee awf. Hee rihlee seemd pudout wihtth mee fur nowihn uhbout Gost. “Them storeez uhbout Gost aynt hafway trew mos timz. Yew bee good, an yew kawlihm mihstur.”

“Mihstur Rihngwood?” I ast.

Dad pawzd furuh sek, then sed “I spoz thats az good az enee. Ya. Mihstur Rihngwoodl dew fur now.”

Wee wawkt thuh restuh thuh way ihn wihtthout sayihn uhnuhthur wurd. Wee both wawkt uhround thuh bihfee an down thuh path threw thuh gardihn, wenihn threw thuh bak dor. Muhmuh wuhz standihn at thuh sihkn, peelihn puhdayduhz, an shee nevr eevihn lookt uhp aduhs wen wee kuhn ihn.

“Jayk sez I gawduh vihzihdur.” Dad sez tewur, an shee stihl dihdn look ovur, juhs kep stairihn at thuh puhdayduhz lik thay wur stairihn bak. “Wair ihzee, Muhtthur?” Id never hurd muh dad tawk ihn that kinduh ton tuh hur. Wuhz lik thuh voys hee yewzd wen hee wuhz swairihn fur reeyul.

“Oudawn thuh porch,” shee sed bak. Ihf eethr wuhn them new I wuhz stihl ihn thuh rewm Im shur thay wooduh tol meeduh skihdadul. I trid tuh dihsuhpeer ihtuh thuh wawlz buhfor thay kd notis mee uhgen. I dihdnt wawnuh mihsuh sekihnd.

“Jeezuhz Krist, wumihn! Yuh dihdn eevihn invidihm ihn?” Muhmuh juhs lookt adihm wihth uh look heed seen uhnuhf tuh no bedurihn tuh argew wihth. Hee juhs wawkt threw thuh kihchihn, muhdurihn wurdz uhnudrihz breth I prawblee dihdn no yet. I stardiht tuh fawlo ihm out, buht muhmuh kawld mee bak. “Jayk. Yew stay put. Lenduh hand wihth suhpur. Iht looks az tho weel hav kuhmpnee.” I kdn buhleev iht – thuh Gost wuhz kuhmihn fur dihnur.

Now that wuhz an ihturestihn uhfair. Skawt an Grayg neerlee trihpt ovur thur tuhngz wen thay wawkt ihn. Burnees an Sairuh, thay dihdn rihlee no uhnuhf uhboudihm tuh thihnk muhch, ihgsep wee had suhmwuhn ovur fur dihnur. An Gramuh, shee wuhz prihdee kwiiht, tew – buht that wuhz hur way, so maybee iht dihdn meen muhch. Iht wuhz muhmuh hew I wacht most. Shee ayt ihnur deluhkiht lihdl bits lik awlwayz, kuhtn uhp eech pees an chewihn fihfdee timz buhfor shee swawlod. Thawuhz awl thuh saym, but yewzhuhlee iht wuhz hur hew kep uhs tawkihn, askihn uhbout skewulwurk ur mindihn uhs tuh tayk smawlur bits, ur chew mor, ur get ar elboz awf thuh taybul. Buht shee dihdn sayuh wurd, nawt somuhchuhz “pas thuh peez, pleez.” Juhs sat thair, lookihn adur playt. Dihdn eevihn tel mee tuh kleen muh turnihps uhp wen I dihdn eetihm, az yewzhuwul. Wihthout hur askihn uhs thihngz, thuh onlee pursihn tawkihn wuhz Dad, an Gost. Thay ast wuhn uhnuthur wuht wuhz new, an Dad kd onlee bihch uhbout thuh wethur fur so lawng, an then iht wuhz Gosts turn.

Turnd out hee hadn eevihn bihn tuh Kwuhbek fur three hol yearz – no wurk out thair, hee sed. Heed bihn juhs nawkihn rownd, hee sed, taykihn wurk wair thur wuhz enee, ihf hee wuhzuhvuh mind tuh dewiht. Sed suhmuh thuh thihngz thay ast yuhduh dew wurihnt wurk furuh man, maybee nawt eevihn furuh dawg. An hee wuhzn uh straynjurduh hard wurk, mind yuh. Sed suhm fokuhd pay yuh ten sents furuh hol dayuh slihngihn rawks, ur braykihn horsihz. No wuhn wood eevihn pay fur lawgihn, kuhz nowuhn had thuh muhnee tuh bi luhmbr. An wuht lihdl hiyurihn thay dihd dew awlwayz went tuh thuh uhthr frenchmihn, soee hiht thuh rod.

Hee had uhnuhf storeez tuh last threw dihnur, an eevihn tho hee wuhz tawkihn awl thuh tim hee stihl manihjd tuh kleen uhp tew helpihnz uh evreethihn, turnihps ihnklewdihd. An then muhmuh puld uh saskuhtewn pi out fruhm uhndur thuh klawth shee had ovur iht tuh keep thuh buhgz awf. Now normuhlee wee had juhstuhnuhf tuh go rownd – Gramuh awlwayz klaymd piz wur tew rihch forur, an sheed juhs hav tee. That lefduh pees eech fur Dad, Muhm, Skawt, Grayg, Burnees, mee, Sairuh, an Lewk. Sept hee dihdn yewzhuhlee gedawl thuh way threw hihz. Wihth Gost thair, tho, that mayd nin, an thair aynt no good way tuh kuhduh pi ihntuh nin. So muhmuh endihd uhp kuhtn iht ihntuh ayt thuh raygyuhlur way, an then kuht haf thuh peesihz ihn haf uhgen. Dad, Gost, Skawt an Grayg gawt thuh ful peesihz, an thuh restuhvuhs gawt them lihdl slihvurz. That left foruh them lihdl peesihz. Wen I gawt tuhthuh enduh mi pees I ast muhmuh ihf I kd hav uhnuhthur an shee took mi playt an gihmee wuhn. Wil shee wuhz uhp shee ast ihf eneewuhn els wawnuhd wuhn, an Gost pudihz playt uhp tewur an sed “surtihnlee, mam, iht trewlee ihz thuh bes pi Iv hadihnyeerz.” An muhmuh lookt adihm lik heed spiht adur, buht shee dihd iht kwihk, then took uhpihz playt an put downuh pees. Hee lookt down

adiht, an sed “Hel, Lihlee, yuh mit az wel puduhnuhthur wuhn down thair. Dihdn no thay wuhz kuht so fin. Il bee threw thihswuhn ihnuh flash, an Id hayt tuh truhbuhl yuh tuh geduhp uhgen.”

Muhmuh muhstuh bihdur lihpu tuh keep fruhm skreemihn. Shee pluhnt iht down an sat down buhfor hee kd askur fur eneethihn els. Shee brawt thuh last pees wihthur, stihl ihn thuh pan, an sadiht buhsid Dadz playt. Ihwuhdnt az far fruhm Gost az shee kduh pudiht, buht shee maydur poynt prihdee klee. Gost kuhntihnyewd awn wihth thuh storee heed bihn telihn, suhmthihn uhbout howee gawt them skarz – slihpt uhndur thuh jam wen iht opihnd uhp uhndurihm, an wenee reecht uhp tuh pul hihmselb uhp, hihz arm gawt pihnd buhtween tew lawgz, an kuhdihm awl thuh wuy down tuhthuh bon. Bled likuh suhnuhvuhbihch, hee sed – an thihs wuhz at thuh dihnur taybul. Muhmuh an Gramuh muhstuh bihn fyewmihn. Wuhdn rihlee thuh kinduh storee tuh tel at thuh taybul, or ihnfruhnuh uhs kihdz. An wil hee wuhz tawkihn hee kep shuhvulihn muhmuhz pi ihn, soihz teeth wur almos mor purpul then yeluh.

An wee wur awl wawchihnihm eet az muhchuhz tawk, an then neer thuh enduhvihz storee, stihl wihth hafuh pees leftawnihz playt hee reechihz klee ovur Dadz playt an stabz thuh las lihdl wedj. Now ihf eneeuhusuhd trid that weeduh puld ar han bak wihth Dadz fork stuhkihn thuh bakuh iht. Juhs nawt suhmthihn yuh dihd – wuhz rewd az hel. Buhdee wuhzuh gest, likihm ur no, soee gawduhway wihth iht.

Wuhdn lawng aftur that that muhmuh tol evreewuhn tuh go awn ihtuh thuh parlur, that shee wuhz shur Dad an “hihz gest” wood lik tuh bee uhlon furuh biht. Then shee told dad tuh tayk “hihm” outsid, kujz awl thuh dihshihz needihd tuh bee duhn yet. Wuhz mi turn tuh dri wut Muhmuh washt that nit – an fur thuh furs tim ihn mi lif I bet, I

dihdn mind. Dadn Gost wen out tuh thuh fruhnt porch, buht uhkors fruhm thuh kihchihn sihmk yuh kd heer dam neer evreethihn eneewuhn sed out thair so I fihgurd I wuhz ihn thuh purfihkt spawt. I new Skawt an Grayg wood di tuh heer wuhdI wuhz heerihn. I lihstihnd suh hard Im suhprizd muhmuh kdnt see muh eerz twihchihn.

Soonz thay wur outsid Dad sez “suh wuht brihngz yuh bak?”

Gost dihdn ansur ridawf, hee juhs sorduh lookt oudat thuh ski furuh mihniht. I kd seeihm thru thuh skreen door, kuhz I kep peekihn ovur muh sholdur wen I kd bee prihdee shur muhmuh wuhdn guhnuh kech iht. Thay wuhz rit uhp uhgenst thuh porch rayul, out ihn thuh suhn ihnsteduh standihn back uhbit ihn thuh shayd. Thay wur standihn sid bi sid, stairihn out at thu ski. Wuhz lik thay kdn stand tuh look at wuhn uhnuhthur. Thur wuhz az muhch difrihnts ihn hit buhtween them az thur wuhz buhtween mee an muhmuh. Yuh kd heer uh horsfli cuhm bi, an iht bownst awf thuh skreen uh cuhpuluh timz buhfor iht wen awn ihts way uhgen.

Wenee dihd ansur hee tol Dad tuh wayduh mihniht, an stept down awf thuh porch. I kdn seeihm fur uhbiht aftur that, buht wenee kuhm bak hee haduh bawdul ihnihz han. Wuhz dark brown glas, thuh saym way awl hewch wuhz bak then – muhstuh hadiht out ihnihz kar. Hee turnz thuh kap awf an taykzuh kuhpuluh swawluhz. Pastiht ovurduh mi dad, buhdI kdn seeihm drihmk, kuhzee wuhz ovur buhsid thuh dor, nawt ihnfruhnuh iht lik thuh Gost. I kd heerihm blowihn thuh breth ouduh hihz cheeks tho – muhstuh bihn strawng stuhf. Hee kurst uhboudiht, buht took uhnuhthr belt buhforee gihv iht bak. I kd heer thuh bewz slawshihn uhrown ihn thuh bawdul azee tihpt iht bak.

Gost sez “Thair. Now weer redee.” Then thurz uh pawz anee sez “almost.” Yuh kd heerihm gulp downuh biht mor. Hee goz “ahhhh” aftur that, lik ihts juhs wuhtee

needihd, an sez “Iv alredeed tol Samee an Brewsee. Thay sed thayd meeduhz heer, ihfn ihts awlrit. I toldihm iht wood bee.” Thenee siz, an fur thuh furs tim thur aynt no hyewmur ihnihz voys. “Danee bihn ded sevihn, ayt muhnths now, Jihmee. Thay dihdn rihlee wawnuh tel mee how.”

“Krist!” Dad sed, an thay wuhz both kwiiht furuh biht. Ihf thay wur drihnkihn I kdnt heer iht. Dad stardiht tuh ask suhmthihn lik “Dihdee – ” but Gost kuhdihm awf.

“Fowndihm ihnihz barn wuhn eevnihn. I dont needtuh telyuh how.”

“Jeezuhz Krist. Aftur awl theez yeerz, wi woodee – ?”

“Damd ihf I no, Jihmee. Damdihf Ino. Awl I kn say ihz iht wuhzuh heluhvuh thihng tuh dew – hihz on kihdz fowndihm. Eevihn thuh lihdI wuhn. I meen – fur fuhksayk.” Wuhdevur Dad sed bak I nevr hurd, kuhz muhmuh turnd rown an gayv them thuh wuhtfor – skoldihnihm both, Dad an Gost, gestur nawt. “Thats uhhout uhnuf uhv that! Il nawt lihstihn tuh that kind uhv tawk. Rihlee! Jaymz, yew shd no bedur! An Wihl, I woodn ihgspekt yew tuh hav ruhspekt fur mee ur eneethihn els, buhdId rathur nawt hav mi chihldrihn ihgspozd tuh that sortuhv viyul, vulgur langwihj! Ihf yew muhst speek that way, tayk iht tuh thuh barn wihth thuh restuh thuh anuhmulz!”

DadnGost lookt thuh saym way mee an Burnees lookt wen wee gawt kawt fitihn. Yewno thuh look, wair yur iz stihk tuh thuh flor. Gost stardiht mewvihn furst. Dad huhng bak an told muhmuh tuh tel Sam an Brews tuh hed baktuh thuh barn ihf thay kaym uhp tuh thuh hous furst. Hee toldur wihthout cuhmihn ihnsid, tho. Stayd awn thuh uhthur siduh thuh dor. Fur sayfteez sayk. Hee tawkt tewur likee wuhz pihst awf, thuh way hee awlwayz dihd wen hee wuhz skaird shee wuhz guhnuh tair ihm uh new ayhol. Muhmuh dihdn say eneethihn, an aktihd lik shee dihdn eevihn heerihm, buht shee muhstuhv kuhz

wen mihstur Ocawnur anihz bruhthur showd uhp rownd ayt uhklawk shee dihd sendihm tuh thuh barn lik Dad ast.

I aynt nevr seen men rihp ihtuh bewz lik that. Wuhzuh dam good thihng thay wur outihn thuh barn, kuhz az iht wuhz thay wur stihl lowd uhnuhf tuh keep uhs uhp mostuh thuh nit. Jeezuhz. Thay wen aftur that hewch likuh flid landihd ihn thuh juhng an thay wur triihn tuh bayul ihdout buhfor iht kd drown. I nevr dihd fihgur out wuht thuh hel thay wur dewihn tuhgethur that nit. Dad an thuh Ocawnurz I kd fihgur, them beeihn nayburz an awl – wuhz uhs, n Sam tuh thuh westuh uhs, n Brews tuh thuh eestuh hihm. Buht Gost wuhz thuh awd wuhn out.

Suhmwuhn – wuhnuh Samz kihdz I thihnk iht wuhz, muhstuh bihn Norm – hee tol mee yeez laydur thadihz dad an uhnuhl an mi dad wur ihn thuh saym outfihht ihn thuh grayt wor. I dihdn no that. Thuh wor wuhdn suhmthihn that eneewuhn evur tawkt uhbout, speshlee tuh thur kihdz. I fihgur maybee thay wur awl ihniht tuhgethur, thuh for uhvm. Kant see enee uhthur way fur mi dad tuh no Gost Rihngwood. Thay muhstuh noihn eeche uhthur az kihdz, an sind uhp fur thuh wor. I thihnk maybee thay wur tew yuhng foriht tuh bee legul, buhdI thihnk bak then thuh ruhkrewtihn awfihsurz lookt thuhthur way ihf uh boy hadihz hart set awn fitin ihf thay wurnt morihn uh kuhpuluh yeez tew yuhng. Thats wuht mayks thuh most sens eneeway, that thay awl survd tuhgethur, an thuh man thay wur drihnkihn tew that nit muhstuh survd wihthihm.

Jeezuhz, buht thay tid wuhn awn. I nevr new mi dad had that sid tewihm. Thay wuhz lowdurihn hel out thair, kaklihn an lafihn. Skaird mee uh biht, tuh heerihm lik that. Sowndihd likuh buhnchuh wulvz fitihn ovuruh karkuhs. Dihdn help nuhn that awluh thuh wihnduhz wur wid opihn, buht yuh kdn klozihm. Ihwuhz so hawt eevihn ihn thuh

mihduluh thuh nit that yuh hadtuh keep em opihn tuh kech eevihn uh snihfuh breez, eevihn tho thur wuhdn yewzhuhlee enee tuh get. Or ihf thur wuhz, yewd geduh mouthfuluh duhst. Thayd go strechihz wair yuh kd heerihm tawkihn an nawt mayk out morenuh wurd heer an thair, buhtyew kd heerihm. Mostuh thuh tim thay wuhz lafihn, tew, buht wuhn tim tewuhvihm stardiht yelihn at wuhn uhnuhthur. Sowndiht lik GostnSam, buhdI woodn say fur surtiht. Yuh kd heerihm klee az day, buhdI dont ruhmembur wuht thay wuhz fitihn uhbout, juhs that Id nevr hurd langwihj lik that – speshlee fruhm Sam Ocawnur, hew wuhz normuhlee wuhnuh thuh kwiihdihst men yewd evur meet. Thuh hous wuhz ded kwiiht. Evreewuhn wuhz juhs layihn thair, lihsnihn tewiht.

Wuhns suhmwuhn stardiht ihn awn o-danee-boy an thuh restuvihm joynd ihn reeyul lowd an ouduh tewn, ihgsep aftur thuh-pips-thuh-pips-ar-kawlihn thay dihdn no thuh wurdz an so thur wuhz juhs that wuhn voys uhgen tuh fihnihsh iht.

Wuriht eevihn krihkihts ur eneethihn, juhs that wuhn voys, sad an fuluh bewz. Duhno hew iht wuhz. I lihsihnd thuh nekst few Suhndayz at church jurihn thuh hihmz, triihn tuh rekuhgniz thuh voys, buht uhkors thay wuhz dihfriht sawngz, an suhng muhch kwiyihdur so I kdn tel ihf iht wuhz Dad thaduht bihn sihngin that nit ur nawt. Thihnk iht wuhz, buht maybee ihwuhz wuhnuh thuh Ocawnurz. Wuhdn Gost. ThadI no. I wooduh hurd thuh kwihbek ihnihz voys.

Hafuhn owur, maybee three kordrz aftur thay gawt duhn wihth o-danee-boy thuh owur uh nit muhstuh gawt tewihm kuhz thay gawt kwiiht. I kd pihkchurihm sihtiht ihnsid thuh doruh thuh barn wihthuh lanturn fur lit, awl stairihn at thuh grown an pasiht thuh hewch uhrown. I ges prawblee evreewuhn wuhz sleepihn bi then – I muhstuh layd

uhwayk lihsnihn tuh thuh kwiyiht furan ovr ur mor, waytihn fur thuh yelihn ur thuh lafihn tuh brayk out uhgen. Wuhz dam neer dawn – nawt kwit suhnuhp yet buht thuh ski wuhz getihn lidur so yuh kd see uh biht. Reeyul urlee ihn thuh mornihn, eneewayz, wen I hadtuh geduhp. Haduh pihs suhmthihn feers. Buhdiht wuhdnt that sihpul that nit. Thuh bihfee wuhz out buhind thuh gardihn, an thawuhz prihtneer thuh barn, an I juhs dihdn wawnuh go out thair that nit. Duhno wi thay mayd mee so uhneeze. Maybee ihwuhz juhs kuhz I hadn evur seen gron men that way buhfor. Thay awl sowndihd angree – that homayd ri kd turn thuh nisiht feluhz meen.

Wen I wuhzuh biht oldur an stardihd drihnkihn muhself I kdn buhleev wuhdiht dihd tuh suhm peepul. Uh frenduh min, Loyd Burel, hee wuhz thihs tawl skihnee gi wiht reeyul wit skihn an red red hair, hee wuhz thuh kinduh gi hewd gihvyuh thuh shurt awfihz bak. Awlwayz lafihn an jokihn an smilihn, uh reeyul reeyul nis gi – uhntihl hee gawduh kuhpuluh belts ihnihm. Then heed swair likuh saylur, an heed pihk fits, smak wihmihn, wudevur. Hee juhs wenuh biht krayzee awn thuh stuhf. Thihs wuhn tim wee wuhz aduh dans anee gawdihntuhiht wiht thihs feluh, an thuh uhthur gi muhstuh hadihm bi three ihnchihs an sihkstee pownz, anee hiht Loyd wihtuh shawt that wooduh drawpduh buhfuhlo. Loyd hihts thuh flor so hardee bownsihz, an thuh uhthur gi fihgurz thuh fits ovur anee starts wawkihn uhway. I don no howee dihdnt, buhdee gawduhp tewihz feet an gawduhp buhhind hihm an let fliuh kihk. Gawdihm ihn buhtween thuh laygz, an thuh feluh dihdn no wuht hihdihm, hee juhs grabdihz krawch an hiht thuh flor, an Loyd wuhz awnihm ihnuh mihniht, puhnchihn an klawihn an I wentuh pulihm awf an bi thuh tim I gawt thair hee wuhz bitihnihm. Heed suhnkihs teeth ihtuh thuh uhthur feluhz cheek, an thuh bluhd wuhz ruhnihn down an wen I puld Loyd awf hee spat ouduh

mouthfuluh bluhdn eevihn uh peesuh thuh giz cheek. Krist. Wee gawdouduh thair kwihk. Wuhdnt ar town, an thuh gi wuhz uh lokuhl, an eevihn ihfee dihdnt havuh huhnurd giz thair tuh seduhl thuh skor suhmwuhn wooduh at leest kawld thuh kawnstuhbul. Wuhz luhkee nowuhn new uhs, ur heeduh prawblee spent uht leest thuh weekend ihnuh sel.

An yuhno wen wee wok uhp thuh nekst mornihn hee wuhz kookihn brekfihst fur uhs. Dihdn ruhmembur thuh nit adawl. Wen I trid tuh telihm uhboudiht hee juhs shruhgd iht awf an ast mee how I wawnuhd mi aygz.

Thats wuht that stuhf dihd tuh peepul. Thats thuh way them men wur that nit, so I wawnihd tuh stay uhway fruhmemawl. Skawt wood pihs out ar wihnduh evreewuhns ihnuhwiyl. Fruhm uhp awn thuh sekihnd flor yuh kd arkiht dam neer hafway uhkraws thuh gardihn. I thawt uhbout dewihn that, an uhbout juhs goihn out thuh uhthur way an pihsihn awf thuh fruhnt porch, buhdld duhn that buhfor an muhmuh skihnd mee foriht – lik I say, shee wuhz helbownd awn uhs growihn uph tuh bee genulmen. Ihf I kduh kuhnvihnst muhself that muhmuh wuhz uhsleep fur shur I miduh duhniht, buht mi feeruh mi muhm kep mee fruhmiht. I layd ihn bed uhntihl iht hurt tuh keep holdihnihdihn, an I new I wuhz guhnuh buhst.

I tiptod awlthuhway downstairz, skairduh keepihn eneebuhdee uhp. Wuhz onlee ihn muh skihveez kuhz iht wuhz suh hot. Wuhz ded kwiiht, nawt eevihn muhskihduhz. Went down an threw thuh kihchihn, kairful tuh shut thuh skreen dor, reel sawft, kuhz ihf yuh dihdn kech iht thuh sprihng wood bang iht bak. Fruhm thair iht wuhz prawblee uh huhnurd steps tuh thuh outhous. Thair wuhzuh nairo lihdl footpath threw muhmuhz gardn. Hafway down iht forkt – rit anyuh went deepur ihntuh thuh gardihn, left an yuh

wur goihn tuh thuh outhous, ur out tuh thuh kewp ur thuh old buhnhous ur suhmthihn.
Wel I kuhm awf thuh porch, mewvihn kwihk kuhz I hadtuh pee suh bad.

An thairz thuh Gost.

At furst I dihdn no ihwuhz hihm, I juhs saw suhmwuhn standihn thair, suhmwuhn hyewj. Lik I say, Gost wuhzuh bihg feluh. Dihdn tayk tew lawng tuh fihgur oudiht wuhz hihm, sihnsee wuhz thuh onlee wuhn uhrown that tawl, buhdiht dihd tayk uhbiht buhfor I reeuhlizd wi hee wuhz standihn thuh way hee wuhz. At furst I thawdee wuhz lookihn at muhmuhz plant, kuhzee wuhz rit uhp neks tewiht, an iht wuhz morihn twis az tawl azee wuhz. Buhdee wuhz standihn sortuh fuhnee, an wuhz lookihn down ihnsteduh uhp. Then I fihgurd ihdout. Hee wuhz pihsihn. I kdn buhleev iht – that suhmwuhn wood stand thair an pihs awn suhmthihn that ment suh much tuh muh muhm. I juhs stood thair gaypihn adihm, mi mouth an iz wid opihn. I gesee hurd mee skihd tewuh stawp kuhz hee lookt ovur at mee an sez “Hay, kihd. Wuhchew dewihn uhp?” an gruhntihd lik wuhdee wuhz dewihn kaymazuh bihg ruhleef.

“I juhs need tuh pe – tuh pihs, Sur.” I sed. Don no wi I kurektiht muhself tuh thuh rewdur way uh sayihn iht. Ges maybee tuh sownd oldur, ur brayvur, ur suhmthihn.

“Good. Good. Draynthuh snayk, ay?” Hee wuhz slurihn suh bad I kd bairlee maykout wuhdee wuhz sayihn. Druhnk – krist, wuhzee. Eevihn juhs standihn thairee wuhz swayihn, an I kep ihgspektihnihm tuh fawl ovur. Lik thuh jiyuhnt ihn thuh kihdz storee hew fawlz out awf thuh beenstawk. Buhdeevihn az sawst azee wuhzee wuhzs stihl thuh Gost, an wenee turnd them iz awn mee I froz, ihgzaklee lik I dihd thuh furs tim.

Wuhdn kuhmpleetlee dark out eneemor, an I wuhz gladuh that kuhz I bet ihfiht wuhz hihz iz wooduh glowd, likuh kats. An ihf thay woodntuh glod, I prawblee wooduh

seen iht eneewayz. Shiht – ihf I wooduh ruhn ihtuh Gost wihth nuhthihn buht moonlit buhtween uhs I prawblee wooduh faynihd ded uhway. Buht thair wee wur, juhs standihn an stairihn at eechuhthur, an I kd feeyul tim slihpihn bi. I kdn mayk muhself get pastihm. Id skweezd biihm that wuhns, buht muhmuh wuhz thair wawchihnihm an iht wuhz ihn thuh liduh day. Buhduhlon, ihn thuh mihduluh thuh nit – no way. Kdn dewiht.

Hee wuhz juhs so dam skairee, tawl azeee wuhz, wihth them awful hanz uh hihz. Anduh kors awl thoz storeez uhboudihm. Moren hafuhvihm wur prawblee bulshiht, muh dad had thuh trewth uhviht, buht lookihn adihm thair, pihsihn awn that plant, wuhdevur thuh hel iht wuhz, yew bedur buhleev I thawt thay wuhz awl trew, an then suhm. I kd juhs see mee triihn tuh pasihm awn that lihdl path buhtween muhmuhz peeze an kairuhts. I new shuraz I no muh on naym thadeed get mee – juhs reech out wihth them gawdawful pawzuh hihz an grab holduh mee. I kd see that gawdam handuh hihz klampihn down ovur muh mouth soz I kdn hawlur uhn pihk mee uhp an kairee mee awf, nevurduh bee hurd fruhm uhgen. Hihz hit, hihz hanz, awl them storeez – ihwuhz lik hee wuhzuh mawnstur. Yuhno mos timz that uh bair ihz mor likleeduh ruhn fruhm yuh then eetyuh – buht yuh heer them storeez, an then yuh cuhm fays tuh fays wihth wuhn, an yuh kant seem tuh ruhmembur eneethihn els buht bairz eetihn peepul. Ihwuhz lik that wihth Gost an mee.

Hee wuhz prawblee tew druhnk tuh dew muhch moren blihnk, rihlee, buhdee juhs sorduh had thihs – I duhno, thihs kinduh powur ovur mee. Iduh onlee hadtuh tayk maybee twenee steps tuh get bi ihm an uhnuhthur fihfdee tuh mayk iht tuh thuh jawn, buhdee had mee so skaird I dihdn eevihn need tuh pee eneemor. Ihtuhd juhs sortuh shrihvuld awl uhp awn mee.

Hee wuhz standihn thair, duhn pihsihn buhdee hadn pudihmselb uhway yet. Juhs standihn thair wihthihz dihk ihnihz hand waytihz fur mee tuh kwiht gawkihn an go awn bi. Nevur sed uhnuhthur wurd, buhdee dihdn mewv awf, eethur. Wuhzuh bihdhuvuh standawf, an thuh lawngur iht went thuh mor I wihsht heed juhs tuhk ihnihz shurt, zihp uhp, n hed baktuh thuh barn. An wuhns I fihgurd Id juhs turn uhrown an hed baktuh bed, then I stardiht wureeihn that soonz I kwiht wawchihnihm hee wood tuhk ihn an start mewvihz, buhdI wuhz shur ihnsteduh mewvihz awf heed kuhm aftur mee. Thawuhz awl I kd handul. Thuh thawduh hihm kuhmihn aftur mee, lopihn down thuh path likuh tew huhnurd pownd wulf ur suhmthihn. I wuhzn goihn nowair.

I duhno how lawng wee stood thair ibawlihn wuhnunuhtur, or how lawng wee wooduh kep awn – thuh skid britihnd kuhnsihduruhtul, buht dawn wuhz maybe juhs past, ur nawt thair yet. N wee wur stuhk, bothuhvus, uhntihl ouduh thuh barn dad, reehlizihn how lawngihz frenduhd bihn gawn yeld “Gost! Wut thuh hel ar yuh dewihn?” An wenee yeld Gost lookt ovur – an I wuhz gawn. Turnd suh fast I kd feel muh heeul dihg uh lihdl rown houl ihn thuh grown. Ran lik hel, tihl I gawd ihnsid – threw opihn thuh dor an wuhz hafway uhp thuh stairz buhfor I hurd thuh dor slam shuht. Furuh sekihn I thawdiht muhstuh bihn Gost, an wen I dov ihntuh bed I puld thuh kuhvurz uhp ovur muh hed an lay thair, hidihn. Muh breth wuhz ragihd, an muh puls wuhz raysihn, thuhdihn ihn muh eerz suh hard I fihgurd I woodn eevihn bee aybul tuh heer thuh sownduh Gost kuhmihn uhp thuh stairz. Kors hee wuhznt kuhmihn, evur, buhdI dihdn geduh wihnkuh sleep. Thuh restuh mi famlee seemd tuh bee sleepihn fin – Skawt an Grayg wur both ihn bed, out kold. Dihdn eevihn wayk uhp wen Id ruhn ihntuh thuh rewm.

Iht wuhdnt tew lawng aftur suhnuhp, so rihlee nawt tew lawng buhfor weed awl bee getihn uhp uhgen, that I hurdihm leev. Sam an Brews went tuhgethur. Thayd kuhm ihn Samz waguhn, an I kd heerihm hookihnuhpihz horsihz. Gost went nawt lawng aftur – heed left them tew nagzuh hiz tid tuh thuh buhgee thuh hol nit. I hurd muh Dad kuhm ihn juhs aftur Gost left, buhdee nevr kaym uhp, hee juhs stayd downstairz. Afturuh biht I hurd Muhmuh go down, an I kd heer that thay wur tawkihn. Thuh kihchihn wuhz rit buhneeth muh bedrewm, buhdiht wuhz juhs sorduhv uh murmur, kdn heer nuhthihn spuhsihfihk adawl. Miduh bihn mi uhmajihnayshuhn, buhdI thihnk muhmuhz wurdz wuruh biht sharpurihn yewzhuwul. Wuhz temtiht tuh kleep downuhn lihsihn ihn, buhdI juhs stayd put tihl I smeld brekfuhst kookihn.

Wuhns muhmuh had thuh baykihn awn I fihgurd ihwuhz sayf an I wenawn down. Dad wuhz sihtihn at thuh taybul, stairihn adiht wihth glasee iz. I thihnkee wuhz moren haf uhsleep, an wen I wawktihn hee bairlee lookt uhp. Juhs sed “Mornihn, kihdo” n went bak tuh wawchihn thuh taybul. Thair wuhzuh kuhpuh kawfee ihnfruhnuh hihm, wihch telz yuh suhmthihn uhbout howee wuhz feelihn, kuz kawfee wuhzuh luhkshuree furuhs then.

Muhmuh wuhzuh biht mor frenlee – Im shur shee wuhzuh mit pudout wihth Dad, an wuhz juhs putihn awnuh good fays fur evreewuhn els. Sed “Good mornihn, Jayk. I thawt fur shur yewd sleep tihl newn tuhday.”

“No, muhmuh.” I sed. Wuhz temtiht tuh say Id slep reel good, buht fihgurd thatuhd bee layihn iht awn tew thihk. “I juhs haftuh pih – tuh pee, mam.” Shee gaymee that look lik wi dihd I hav tuh bee so vulgur wen shee wuhz kookihn brekfuhst, how wuhz shee spostuh keepur apuhtit, an let mee bi so I kd gedawn wihth iht.

Now that I new Gost wuhz goodngawn thuh need kaym bak suhmthihn feers so I dihdn wayst enee tim getihn out tuh thuh bihfee. Dihdn spair morihnuh glans at thuh weed awn thuh way thair – an that wuhz juhs tuh mayk shur Gost wuhdnt stihl lurkihn out thair. Az ihwuhz, I dihdn needtuh wuree. I nevur dihd seeihm uhgen. Nevur sawihm ihn town awn eneeuh thuh timz I wenihn that suhmur, thoe muhstuh stuhk uhrown. Nevur rihlee hurd wuht hapihnd tewihm. Don no ihfee kep awn lawgihn outihn Kwuhbek ur romihn uhrown, ur wuht. Maybee hee gawt wurk ihn thuh aireeyuh an iht wuhz juhst luhk that wee nevur krawst paths uhgen. Maybee hee seduld down, stardihd farmihn, an haduh famlee. I duhno – kant see that suhmhow, that uh man lik Gost kduh evur bihn hapee ruhnihn uh farm, ur playihn wihthihz kihdz. Wooduh felt tew tid down. Buht straynjur thihngzuhv hapihnd, I spoz.

Eneewayz, iht wuhdnt tihl I wuhz awn mi way bak, wen I wuhz mor at muh leezhur, that I lookt adiht. Muhmuhz pridihnjoy wuhz ihnuh pewuluh yurihn. Wuhdn juhstuh biht, eethur. Wuhzuh puhdl bihg uhnuhf tuh splash ihn. Now ihf heeduh juhs pihst thair that wuhn tim, iht prawblee wooduh suhkt ihntuh thuh durt bi mornihn. Kduh bihn that awluhvihm yewzdiht ihnsteduh thuh outhous, buhdI had thihs feelihn thuh uhthurz dihd thihngz prawpur, sihns thuh outhous wuhz klosur duh thuh barn then thuh weed. Gostuhd gawn ouduhihz way tuh get tewiht – lesee wuhz awnihz way ihntuh thuh hous, an juhs duhsidihd tuh stawp an pihs awn thuh way thair. Wihth thuh uhmownt thay drank, thay awl muhstuh hadtuh pihs awfihn, an I thihnk Gost muhstuh ruhleevd hihmself awn iht evree chansee gawt. Wuhndur wi heed dew that – pihk thuh bihgiht thihng an pihs awl ovur iht. Eneethihng that grew wuhz speshul that yeer, weedur nawt, an heed juhs pihst awniht. Krist.

Wen I saw iht I wawnuhd tuh tel muhmuh, buht weev awl hurd that ihgspreshuhn bout kihlihn thuh mesihnjur, an shee wuhz awlredeee puhdout aziht wuhz, so I dihdn say uh thihng. Prawblee woodihnuh duhn dad enee good eethur, mee sturihn thuh pawt. So wen I gawdihn an saw gramuh an Burnees awlredeee uhp, an Muhmuh kawlihn evreewuhn tuh kuhmangediht, I juhs lediht go an duhgihn.

Bi thuh tim weed et Id furgawtihn uhboudiht, morurles, so I nevir saw muhmuhz reeakshuhn wen shee seen iht. Nekst tim I went bi iht I lookt an thair wuhzuh piuluh urth awniht. Muhmuh muhstuh duhmptuh kuhpuluh shuhvulfulz awntawpuhiht tuh help sawp uhp Gosts pihs. Gawd, shee muhstuh bihn fiht tuh bee tid.

Fur awluhthuh pihs Gost let lews awn iht, iht muhs nawduh hurdiht nuhn, kuhz bi thuh enduh thuh suhmur ihwuhz stihl thair. Muhstuh bihn forteen ur fihfteen feet hi bi thuh tim thuh furst sno cuhm.

Thats thuh last thihng I ruhmembur uhboudiht – wee gawduh kuhpuluh rihlee bihg snostormz urlee awn that yeer. Bi haluhween thuh fensposts wur bureed an bi novembur thuh sno wuhz piuld kleeer uhp tuh thuh sekihnd flor. Buht fur thuh lawngihst tim yew kd see thuh tawpuh that weed pokihn ouduh thuh sno. Buht thuh wihnur muhstuh bihn tew hard awniht, kuhz wen thuh sno meltihd thur wuhdn eevihnuh traysuh iht.

thuh worshiin

Shee wuhz huhduhld ihtuh hurselb uhgihnst thuh kold wihthur armz rapt uhrown hurselb uhgihnst thuh bit ihn thuh air.

I kn stihl ruhmembur thuh way shee lookt az shee wenout intuh thuh wihnd. Muh vyew wuhz kuhdihntewuh grihd bi thuh skreen dor buhtween thuh kihchihn an thuh bak porch. Wair I sat, at thuh kihchihn taybul ihn uhway fruhm thuh wihnd, ihwuhz stihl worm, an thuh air smeld yeestee cuhzuh thuh lovz kewlihn awn thuh kownr buhneeth chekt tee towulz. Ihwuhz jewn, uhnuhthur dri jewn, an no sin that juhli, ihfihd evur kaym, wood brihng enee wawdur wihth iht. I wuhz wuhnuh thuh few hewd eevihn bawthurd tuh tri weet uhgen, an iht grew spuradihkle. Ur fihtfulee, ur langwihndlee. Ubseenlee. Wuhdevur yuh wawnuh kawl iht, ihwuhz por weet, feed weet fruhm wuht shduh bihnuh krawp fiht furuh kihng, az thay prawmihst thur hardeeur new strayn wood bee. Hardeeur. Huh. Wuhns thuh wihnd kwiht blowihn an thuh weet wuhz awl layd down muh feeyuldz lookt lik thuh last uhbzurd komovur uhvan ayjih man hew dont wawnuh udmihth heez getihn old. Ihwuhz juhstuh kuhpuluh wihspee fawlihkulz shuhlakt tuh thuh surfihs uhvan uhthurwiz bawld hed.

I dihdn awfihn sihdihn thuh kihchihn lik I wuhz that day, dihdn awfihn strech out muh laygz awnuh chair – ihn fak, both muh neez pawpt az I lihftihd muh laygz uhp tuh

gihvihmuh rest. I wuhzuh man hew dihdn ruhlaks awfihn, leest thadurlee ihn thuh day. Buhdiht hardlee seemd wurth iht, tuh keep awn wurkihn ihn thuh duhst awnuh day wen thuh suhmur breezihz blew so kewul. Kold, akchuhlee. Nawt wihnur kold, nawt lik that, buht kold uhnuhf so wen iht blew uhkraws thuh bakuh muh shurt thuh swet went awl kold awn mi skihn. Juhs that wuhns Id pakdihdihn urlee an kuhm ihn shortlee aftur luhnch, wen thuh wihn stardiht pihkihn uhp.

I kd tel shee dihdn lik mee thair, ihnur spays an ihnur tim, thadiht threwur awf, mee juhs sihtihn thair wil shee wuhz wurkihn. Stihl, I dihdn no wuht tuh dew wiht muhself. I kduh spent thuh tim triihnuh wurk meeruhkulz out thair, buht thuh duhst wuhz kihkihn uhp so thiik I kep chokihn awniht. Shee trid tawkihnuh mee wuhns, buht I dihdn wawnuh tawk tewur. I dihdn wawnuh tawk uhboudiht, about gihvihn uhp, buhkuhz thuh trewth wuhz I dihdn no ihf wee kd go uhnuhthur week wihtout rayn. Eevihn wiht iht, thair dihdn seem tuh bee uhnuhf tuh maykiht threw thuh yeer wiht seed muhnee fur sprihng. I dihdn say muhch, juhst sihtawn thuh tee sheed mayd mee an staird absihtntlee at thuh wawl, lawst ihnsid muh thawhts.

I bairlee hurdur thuh furst tim, trewth bee told. Sheed awl buht shreekt, an I bairlee hurdur. Thuh sekihnd tim shee sed iht, “O gawd,” ihwuhzn so franikh, buht juhs buhkuhz ihwuhz thuh sekihn tim shee sedihd iht brok threw muh thawts. Ya, that sekihn tim iht kawt mi uhtensuhn — “O gawd. Thuh worshihtn!” Sheed sed that las biht lik yuh say thuh naymuh yur sihstr ihf yuh ruhn ihtuh hur awn thuh street uhnihtspektuhdlee aftur sihks yeerz wihtout seeihnur. Iht burst ovurur kuhlurlihs lihps ihnuh torihnt. I gawduhp kwihklee then, buhdawlredeed shee wuhz gawn awf thuh porch, hediht fur thuh klozlin Id puduhtp forur wen wee gawt maireed. Thuh dayz lawndree buhkt ihn thuh

gayul likuh brawnko nobuhdee kd rid. I lookt ihtuh thuh wihnd az I lef thuh dor, muh breth fur thuh momihnt suhkt fruhm mi bawdee bi thuh ihmihj ihn thuh ski.

Wuhduhd bihn blew momihnts buhfor now teemd wihthuh rolihn blaknihs. Iht lookt azihf thuh nituhd kuhm azuhn armee, had kuhm nawt tuh tayk ihts turn an ruhseed buht tuh blawk out thuh suhn furevur. Iht lookt likuh wawl rayzd fruhm thuh grownd juhs beeyawn mi furthihst fensihz awl thuh way duh gawd hihmself. Iht mewvd fast, so Id hardlee puduh foot awn thuh porch buhfor ihwuhz awl awn tawp uhmee, thuh hol aremz wurthuh urth kuhvurihnmee, pushihn ihts way ihtuh muh eerz, uhp-muh nawstrihlz, clawihn atmuh iz. I klosdihm — ihwuhz shuhdihm ur lewzihm. I skreemd forur, anthuh wihnd kawt mi voys an took iht uhway, an ruhplayst ihdihn muh mouth wihth layur aftur layur uhv dri blak urth.

Shee haduh short naym. Lihl. Short fur Lihleeyuhn, an I kdn eevihn shout that ihtuh that wihnd, wihthihts kargo uh soyyul. I tookuh step tuhwordur — meenihn tuh gedur bak ihn thuh hous, lawndree bee damd, buht trihpt awn thuh absihns uhthuh furst stair down awf thuh porch an fel tuh thuh grown. Thuh wihnd pusht atmee, triihn uh roul mee ovur, pild urth uhp buhsidmee likuh mowntuhnraynj ihn mihnuhchur. I pihkt muhself uhp, blindihd, defihnd, an rendurd voyslihs bi thuh turihbul blak wihnd, an lurcht forwurd, trihpihn uhgen ovur thuh step, clawihn mi way tuh thuh dor, past iht ihtuh thuh kihchihn, wair I lay awn thuh woodihn flor, pantihn. I ment onlee tuh kech muh breth, tuh ti suhmthihn uhrown mi iz an go out uhgen, buht suhmhow I dihdn. I wuhz uhnshur — thuh air seemd uhgenst mee, tuh bee triihn tuh bairee mee wair I lay, ur wair I stood.

Ihwuhz awl ovur, juhstuh cuhpuluh mihnihts laydur. I hadn trewlee kawt muh breth yet, wen thuh shrihl howul uh thuh blak wihnd faydihd ihtuh thuh dihtihnts,

ihntuh thuh eest.

I stood uhp then, an wenihn surchuhvur. I kawldur. "Lihl!" "Lihl!," pushihnur
naym out eech tim wihthuh ful breth. Shee dihdn ansur. Shee kdnuh gawn far, nawdihn
that slihm bihduh tim, nawdouduh haylihn dihistuhns, thawuhz fur shur.

I fowndur, eezuhlee uhnuhf, nawt twenee feet fruhm thuh step tuh thuh bak porch.
Sheed manihj tuh geduh sihngul bedsheet buhfor ihd hiht. Thuh wihnd kawt thuh lews
tayul uh thuh sheet ihnur hanz, wihpt ihts end ovur an uhrownur laygz, so wen finuhlee
shee reeyuhlzid shee needihd tuh mewv shee trihpt uhp ihniht. Trihpt an fel, rapt uhp ihn
that sheet, wihch now had gawn blak rit down tewihts fiburz. Shee mayuhv panihkt, may
juhs nawduhv bihn aybul tuh seeur way tuh get kleeer ihn thuh blindihn duhst, an lay thair
ihn thuh wihnd, aziht kaireed thuh soyul uhkraws thuh yard. Shee muhstuh bihn kawlihn
tuhmee tuh kuhm helpur. Purhaps skreemihn buhdI hop shee wuhz kawlihn formee, that
shee nevur lawst hop thadId kuhm tewur reskyew.

I no that, that shee wuhz kawlihn furmee, buhkuhz hur mouth wuhz stihl opihn
wen I fowndur, opihn an pakt fuluh durt, durt that shee chokt awn, durt that shee
swawlod, durt that laydur I paynstaykihnlee skewpt wihth muh on tew fihngurz ouduhvur
mouth. Laydur I pudiht ihnuh smawl flowurpawt an then grewuh chairee tuhmayduh
plant awn thuh wihnduhsihl ihn thuh kihchihn uhp uhbuhv thuh sihnk. Wen thuh frewt
lookt rip I mayduh sanwihch fruhm iht, buht then kdn let muhself eediht. Hur iz. Thats
thuh hard thihng, hur bewdihful gray iz that stayd so brit an so yuhng eevihn az thay ayjd
an ar chihldrihn maydur goduh fat, juhs thuh biht shee dihd. Wen I fowndur hur huriz
wur opihn an thay wur fihld wihth urth tew, so wen I furst sawur thuh blak surkuhls lookt
lik houlz an I thawt that thuh wihnduhd taykihnur iz. I wuhndurd how iht wuhz

pawsuhbul, that thuh wihnd kd tayk suhchuh parduhvuh pursuhn, uhntihl I saw mi mihstayk.

Eevihn then I kdn brihng miself tuh klozur iz, thuh way yuh dew wihthuh ded pursihn yuh luhv buhkuhz I wooduhv hadtuh wip thuh soyul fruhm them, an I kant uhmajihn tuhchihnur naykihd i wihth muh thuhmz, tuhchihn uh parduhvur I nevr tuhcht wil shee wuhz uhliv. So I hadtuh leevur thair, stairihn at thuh ski threw thoz kaduhraks uh urth, I hadtuh sadul uhp mi hors an go ihntuh town an get thuh mihnihstur, uh yuhng smilihn sawmbur man hew kuhmz out tuh thuh farm, seez mi wif raptuhpihnuh wit bedsheet lik suhm uhjihpshuhn muhmee, an kleenzur iz wihthihz thumz, ihgzaklee thuh way ihwuhz so unthinkuhbul tewuhv duhn muhself. An thenee klozihzur iz.

Shee wuhz huhduhld ihntuh hurself uhgihnst thuh kold wihthur armz rapt uhrown hurself uhgihnst thuh bit ihn thuh air.