



## *I Love to Tell the Story*

**W**hen I began to write this lecture, it was still the year 2000. You remember that year, don't you? It was the year the world was to come to an end.

Although we envisioned the end of the world differently from our ancestors, we were just as frightened by that array of zeroes as any ignorant peasant living in Christian Europe in the year of our Lord, 999. When they envisioned the end of all things, they believed that God would come in his (God was definitely male in those days) wrath and destroy the sinful world, snatching up the few righteous to heaven and blasting most of humankind to the nether regions of everlasting fire.

In the year 1999 some people believed god was once more poised to destroy the earth. People had not really changed. We were still terrified by all those zeroes. But the god poised to destroy us had changed. In these latter days, there may have been a few saints up on the mountain top talking to Yahweh, but our real leaders were down in Silicon Valley building us a twentieth-century calf of golden microchips. While the church was distracted by arguments about human sexuality, technology became civilization's god. Thus it was...confronted once more with that string of zeroes, we were terrified that our end was near. But it was not the four horsemen of the Apocalypse who would end it all. It was the dark angels of our great god Technology—our computers—that would be the instruments of global destruction. Well, it didn't happen.

But there's still 2001. Remember *2001*? Well, maybe you weren't even alive in 1968 when Stanley Kubrick took a short story by the science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke and turned it into a powerful, often terrifying film—

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a sort of cautionary tower of Babel tale for a world becoming increasingly enamored with the power of technology. Hal 9000—the ultimate computer which so resembles its human makers that it goes insane—lives on in parody, but the terror Hal inspired cannot be dismissed with comic imitations. Some of us have only to hear the first few bars of Richard Strauss’s haunting “Thus Spoke Zarathustra” to bring to our fearful imaginations a world in which computers have run amok. But Clarke, the creator of Hal the ultimate computer, is not so afraid of the power of computers. When asked in a 1999 interview what he thought was the greatest danger to humankind in the world today, he replied: “Humankind. Our only hope is intelligence and common sense—which is so uncommon.”

Nearly twenty years ago when our older son was a freshman in college, I made the trip to Dartmouth for the parents’ weekend. At that time John Kemeny—an early pioneer in the field of computer science was not only the president of the college but also a professor of the introductory freshman computer course. Dr. Kemeny spoke to the parents about the future of computers, and during the question-and-answer period, an earnest father asked Dr. Kemeny if there were anything that a computer would not eventually be able to do. Dr. Kemeny replied that there were two tasks for which the human mind was perfectly suited but that he did not believe a computer would ever be able to adequately accomplish. And if, somehow, computers were made that should be able to perform these tasks, he hoped fervently that they would never be used to do so. The two areas that Dr. Kemeny believed must remain the purview of the human mind were creativity and judgment.

These young people of ours, so wed to their computers, are still growing up in a world where human beings are both a greater threat and a greater hope than any machine. And this is why we are important—you and I. Not because we can teach our young people about the wired world (indeed, we have to learn these skills from them), not because we must warn them away from it (we couldn’t if we tried), but because we are the church and we have a story to tell. We are people who tell a particular story about the Creator and Judge. Our story tells us that we were created in the image, the very likeness of that Creator who has made all things beautiful in their time and that Judge whose loving kindness toward weak and wayward humankind (who are both the threat and the promise in that magnificent universe) endures forever.

But how do we tell our story to the young who think they have nothing to learn from us? Well, that is the question we are tackling in this series of lectures, isn’t it? It is not a question for which I have the answer. But I, with

you, am a part of the struggle for an answer. I am part of that struggle as a person who tells stories. I am a lover of stories, and I believe that it is through stories that people through the ages and people of all ages have found meaning and direction for their lives.

Some time ago I heard a therapist who works with disturbed young people say something that has haunted me ever since. “When I began my practice,” he said, “I would always start out the same way with a new patient. I would invite the patient to tell me his or her story. It didn’t matter if the story the patient told was true or not. The story he or she told gave me a clue as to how to proceed. But that doesn’t work anymore,” he said. “I keep meeting with teenagers who look at me perfectly blankly when I ask them about their stories. I don’t have a story,” they’ll say. “I’m not sure I know how to work with children who have no stories,” he said.

But that despairing therapist does not have the last word for us. I hope you are aware of the writing of Eugene Peterson whose work I just met recently. Peterson, who is both a minister and a writer, tells about an early crisis in his ministry. “I had come to this place to live in the presence of God, to live with passion—and to gather others into the presence of God, introducing them into the possibilities of a passionate life,” he says.

“But here I was [like Jonah] on a religious ship on which God was peripheral to the bottom line, in the background of an enterprise that was mostly informed by psychology, sociology, and management-by-objective.” He searched in vain for a vocational mentor among the living to lead him through this soul-destroying time. “Then,” he says, “I found Fyodor Dostoyevsky.... I took my appointments calendar and wrote in two-hour meetings with “FD” three afternoons a week. Over the next seven months I read through the entire corpus, some of it twice. From three to five o’clock on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday I met with FD in my study and had leisurely conversations through *Crime and Punishment*, *Letters from the Underworld*, *The Idiot*, *A Raw Youth*, *The Devils*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. I spent those afternoons with a man for whom God and passion were integral—and integrated. All winter long, through the spring, and a month or two into the summer, I hid away in my study reading Penguin paperbacks.... And then the crisis was over. Thanks to Dostoyevsky, God and passion would never again be at risk, at least vocationally.”<sup>1</sup>

I couldn’t watch your faces while I read that quotation, but I’m guessing some of you are appalled at the thought of a young pastor hiding away in his study reading stories—spending six hours a week for seven months reading fiction when he had so many important things screaming for his

attention. Yet Peterson believes, these many years later, that it was reading those stories that not only saved his vocation but made him see his congregation in a divine light. He had thought of them as “people whose spirits had taken early retirement, whose minds had been checked at the door. Suburbia [he had decided] lobotomized spirituality.... These people who assembled in worship with me each week had such *puny* ideas of themselves.... I was in danger of reducing my idea of them to their self-concepts. And then Dostoyevsky rebuked me. He lived in an almost identical society. But while showing the greatest aversion to the culture itself, he refused to take the evidence that the people presented of themselves as the truth; he dove beneath the surface of their lives and discovered in the depths fire and passion and God.... He trained my antennae to pick up the suppressed signals of spirituality in the denatured stock language of these conversations, discovering tragic plots and comic episodes, works-in-progress all around me. I was living in a world redolent with spirituality. There were no ordinary people.”<sup>2</sup>

People often ask me how I can write for today’s children and young people. “They’re so different today. They’ve been raised on T.V. and computer games and now the Internet. They have forty-five second attention spans. They’re used to being flooded with electronic information that catches the eye, bombards the senses, and demands no thought. Indeed, it gives them no opportunity for reflection. That’s what children today want,” I am often told—not narrative, not story, not, heaven help us, books. But I refuse to accept these puny concepts of children and youth in our society. And my experience of writing stories for them has proven me right. I have found that beneath that pseudo-cynicism there is a searching mind and a hungry spirit. I take their struggles and questions seriously, not because I have solutions to their struggles or answers to their questions but because I am engaged in similar struggles. I am asking the same questions.

Let me tell you a story. In the spring of 1974, I learned that I had cancer—a very ordinary, garden variety of the disease—which was found early, operated upon, and has not in these past twenty-seven years ever troubled me again. But at the time it didn’t seem so ordinary to me. I had four young children. The thought of dying at all was frightening, but the thought of leaving my children seemed more than I could bear.

The year had already been a hard one for the children. The small school they attended was closed, and they were sent to a much larger school on the other side of town. David, our second grader, was miserable. At the little school he had been something of the first grade celebrity. Even then he was a natural mimic and very funny little fellow as well as the class artist—

famous for his hilarious illustrations.

In the new big school he found himself in a class of strangers. When he tried to be funny, they thought he was weird; when he drew his comic pictures, they sneered. He came home in tears. He was never going back to that school again as long as he lived, and there was no way I could make him. I, who had gone to thirteen schools by the time I was eighteen and had been initially despised at nearly all of them, was so sympathetic with my seven-year-old's unhappiness that I'm sure I made his problems worse.

Anyhow, we were saved that fall. One day the funny, happy little boy that I thought I'd lost forever, came running in from school. "Me and Lisa Hill are making a diorama of *Little House in the Big Woods!*" he cried, beaming all over. I'd never heard of Lisa Hill until that moment. From then on I was to hear hardly any other name.

Let me read you something I wrote about their friendship back in 1975.

"I'm trying to remember," I wrote, "if it worried me that David had chosen a girl to be his best friend. I hope not, but I can't promise. At any rate, anyone would have been fortunate to have Lisa for a friend. Bright, joy-filled, self-assured—the only girl to invade the second and third grade T-ball team. But sharing David's love for animals and art..."

Lisa was the person you did everything with and told everything to. She laughed at his jokes (the ones his older brother and sister groaned over), and he laughed at hers. They played long, imaginative games in the woods behind her house, and in the late spring they both turned eight years old.

On a bright August afternoon, the phone call came. I listened in disbelief and horror and then quickly bypassed David, reading in the living room, to search out his father. Lisa was dead. Killed by lightning on a bright summer afternoon.

Somehow I told David and held him while he cried. Knowing in my heart that those tears would be only the first stirrings of a pain that would shake his whole young being.

"I know why Lisa died," he said one night after his prayers. "It's because God hates me. He's probably going to kill Mary next." (Mary is his beloved younger sister.)

David decided that God had made a list and was going to kill off everyone David loved. Indeed, his beloved third grade teacher told me afterward that she had had a miscarriage that winter. When a substitute teacher appeared and David learned Mrs. Beckman was in the hospital, he ran away from school and was persuaded to return only when the principal went out and found him hiding in a tree in the park nearby and promised him he'd had

nothing to do with his teacher's mishap. Every time my husband or I left the house, the children were sure we would never return.

That January I went to the regular monthly meeting of the Children's Book Guild of Washington. Members took turns sitting at the head table with the guest speaker for the luncheon, and it happened to be my turn. I had never met the speaker before. She was the senior editor for a New York publishing house. In the quiet chitchat before the meal was served, one of my fellow members said to me quite innocently, "How are the children?" I opened my mouth to say "fine, thank you," and what came spewing out of my mouth was a stream of anguish. In the rational part of my mind, I knew I was behaving badly, but I couldn't help myself. The story of my son's pain simply poured out.

I couldn't stop, but finally, I ran out. There was a long silence. And then the guest of honor from New York said gently, "I know this sounds just like an editor, but you ought to write that story."

I went home that day and thought about what the editor had said. I couldn't do what I wanted to do. I wanted to bring back Lisa from the dead. I couldn't even comfort my grieving child. So I would do what I could. I would write a story that would somehow help me make sense of this senseless tragedy.

As it turned out, I didn't have any idea how to begin. I stared at the typewriter a lot. And then I said to myself what has become almost a motto of mine in the years since, "If you can't write what you want to, write what you can."

The only thing I could write initially was a sort of history of the friendship between David and Lisa, a part of which I read you a few minutes ago. It's interesting, perhaps, to say that after I wrote that three-page memoir, I totally lost it. I didn't even remember it existed. It surfaced several years after the book was published in one of my infrequent attacks upon the stacks of paper threatening to engulf my study.

Anyhow, following that initial piece, I started to try to turn the experience into a story. After several false starts, I began to write a story in pencil in a used notebook, so that if it came to nothing, I could pretend that I'd never been very serious about it. Gradually, I produced thirty-two smudged pages, which I transferred to the typewriter.

The book was moving forward, going well, until suddenly one day I realized that when I began work the next day I would be writing the chapter in which Leslie Burke (a.k.a. Lisa Hill) would die. I solved that problem. I just didn't go to work the next day. I straightened my shelves. I did the laundry. I

even cleaned the kitchen. That took several days. I was reduced to scrubbing the floors on my hands and knees when a longtime friend of mine asked quite casually, “How is your book going?”

She of course didn’t know what book I was writing, nor even that no one is *ever* supposed to ask me how my work is going. But we have been friends since our days together at Presbyterian School of Christian Education, and she feels free to say anything she wants to me.

So I did what I had done months before at the luncheon. I blubbered out the truth. I told her the book was terrible and going nowhere. “I guess,” I said, thinking I was very wise, “I guess I just can’t go through Lisa’s death again.”

Estelle looked me straight in the eye. “I don’t think it’s Lisa’s death you can’t face, Katherine. I think it’s yours.”

I went home to my study and shut the door. If it were Lisa’s death I couldn’t face that was one thing, but if it were my own, there was no escape. I would have to finish the book. I wrote the chapter and moved straight through to the end of the draft, the sweat pouring down my arms. And because I could not stand to have it around, I did what no real writer would ever do—I mailed the manuscript to my editor, Virginia Buckley, before the sweat had evaporated.

As soon as I left the post office, I was seized with terror. What had I done? What would my editor think of this terrible book? Finally, Virginia called. “I want to talk to you about this new manuscript.” “Yes,” I answered. “I laughed through the first two thirds and cried through the last,” she said. I nearly collapsed with relief. It was all right. She understood what I was trying to do. “Now,” she said, “let’s turn it into a book.”

I love revisions. Where else in life, as I have said more than once, can spilt milk be turned into ice cream? And so I revised the book. The initial writing had been one of the worst experiences of my life. The rewriting was one of the most glorious.

I was on such a high that I wrote to Virginia: “I know that love is blind because I’ve just mailed you a flawless manuscript.”

You’ll be happy to know that my sight was soon restored. I knew perfectly well that it was not a flawless manuscript anymore than a child of mine is without sin. But I loved it almost as fiercely. I didn’t think the world would. But in a funny way, I didn’t care. The book had done so much for me that I couldn’t be bothered about critics or the general public. If I thought about reactions to the book at all, I thought that probably no one whose name was not Paterson would be able to understand it.

The book was twenty-three years old last September. It has sold literally

millions of copies in twenty-five languages. I suppose I can no longer maintain that you have to be named Paterson to understand it.

Readers all over the world have brought to this book their own lives—joys, pains, sorrows—and the gift of their own imaginations and have made this simple little story into something far more wonderful than I could have ever made it alone.

William Butler Yeats said that “if we understand our own minds, and the things that are striving to utter themselves through our minds, we move others, not because we have thought about those others, but because all life has the same root.”

If we give ourselves and our own stories to others, they will be moved. As different as my young audience is from me, our lives have the same root. And if I dare to share the deepest part of myself with them, they will respond from the deepest parts of themselves.

Barry Lopez, in a powerful essay about the nature of story, says that it is the function of narrative to “nurture and heal, to restore a spirit in disarray”; that literature is important insofar as it sustains us “with illumination and heal[s] us.”<sup>3</sup> In theological terms we are talking about revelation and reconciliation. In the Bible, as in fiction, these abstract concepts come alive for us in stories.

When I was young, the common idea was that the dividing line between animal and human was the ability to make tools. We have these wonderful thumbs, you see, and they allow us to make tools, so we can sharpen rocks and pitch them at rabbits. Jane Goodall has shattered that theory. Chimpanzees make tools. We have to look further. What is our distinction? Is it the ability to communicate? No, I think it’s more complicated than that. As the scientist Jacob Bronowski reminds us, animals can communicate with one another. They give signals of danger and mating calls. But they do not, as far as we know, name things. They do not, again, as far as we know, break down a cry into individual words and then arrange those words into new sentences with different meanings. They do not create images. Animals, you see, lack imagination, which seems to be a distinctly human gift. “The power,” Bronowski says, “that man has over nature and himself, and that a dog lacks, lies in his command of imaginary experience. He alone has the symbols which fix the past and play with the future, possible and impossible.”<sup>4</sup>

When we speak of being created in “the image of God,” what we mean, perhaps, is that we alone of all his creatures possess imagination. Or in simpler language, we are the animal that can tell stories and that has made the difference.

I was lecturing at a university some years ago and had the privilege (and I use the word a bit loosely here) of having lunch with a small group of graduate students who wanted to eat with and/or eat up the visiting writer. Now one young man in the group was very proud to relate how he had gone from the foolish faith of his childhood to a wonderfully sophisticated nihilism, so he felt compelled to attack me on the grounds of what he regarded as my childish religiosity.

In the course of the discussion I said something about the stories of the Bible, and he screeched in delighted triumph. "So," he yelled loud enough for the entire restaurant to hear, "So! You think they're merely stories."

"If you knew what I meant by 'stories,'" I answered, and I hope in a quiet, polite, intelligent, mature manner, "If you knew what I meant by 'stories,' you would never use the word 'mere' to describe them."

In his foreword to the play, *J. B.*, Archibald MacLeish describes Job's search for the "meaning of his afflictions." "Job," MacLeish tells us "wants *justice* of the universe. He needs to know the reason for his wretchedness. And it is in those repeated cries of his that we hear most clearly our own voices." MacLeish continues, "For our age is an age haunted and driven by the need to know. Not only is our science full of it but our arts also." (And though MacLeish does not say so, I think this is one reason fundamentalism is so attractive today. We long for absolute surety in this chaotic world of ours.) MacLeish says that this passion to know is the place where "our story and the story of Job come closest to each other. Job is not *answered* in the Bible by the voice out of the whirling wind. He is *silenced* by it—silenced by some thirty or forty of the greatest lines in all literature—silenced by the might and majesty and magnificence of the creation. He is brought, not to *know*, but to *see*."<sup>5</sup> This is what stories do for us. They allow us a vision of the unknowable. They let us perceive what we cannot prove.

Again, let me illustrate with a story. Moses is in the wilderness, and, as usual, the people of Israel are, as the King James has it, "murmuring." Murmuring being a polite term for armed mutiny. Moses is at the point of despair. He needs a sign from God to keep him from going completely under. As Bishop Tutu said in the glory days of apartheid, "There are occasions when you say, 'Well, God, you are in charge. This is your world. But do you think you could make it slightly more obvious?'" Moses was at one of those occasions, and, unlike the good bishop, he wanted God to make his authority more than slightly obvious. "I beseech thee," Moses prays, "shew me thy glory."

At this point I, as a writer, need to say something about the copy editor

of the book of Exodus. In chapter 33, the fellow must have nodded off because in verse 11, we read, “And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” But now not ten verses later, God says to Moses, “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me and live.” And then there follows the good part of the story, for the Lord goes on to say, “Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”<sup>6</sup> Isn’t that a wonderful image? I’m grateful the copy editor didn’t red-line the contradiction. I can’t picture Moses speaking face to face with God, but in that majestic covering and uncovering hand, we have protection and mercy, and even humor, which may be inadvertent and the fault of the ancient translators, but it still adds an irresistible charm to a story that we can tell and retell with awe and pleasure for another several thousand years.

When it comes to Truth with a capital T, we will never “know” it in the scientific manner, but we might, if we are very fortunate or very blessed, peep through the cracks of the almighty fingers and get a glimpse of the back parts. I think that stories give us a way of peeping through those cracks.

Now people have always known this. The answer to the child’s ubiquitous why has been from time immemorial, a story. As Kipling said, “No one in the world knew what truth was till someone had told a story.”

In our so-called scientific culture we have reversed evolution. We regard the advanced person as the one who sharpens rocks. It is, we think, the primitive person who tells stories.

Stories, Barry Lopez says, should not only illumine, but they should heal. The word *heal* means to make whole. This is more than patching up; it is more than simply catharsis, the purging of the emotions. We are concerned here with growing, with becoming. We do not come into this world fully human. We become human, we become whole, and stories are vital nourishment in this process of becoming fully human, of becoming whole.

Stories do not heal because the writer sets out as a literary paramedic rushing out to bandage society’s wounds. They heal, Lopez says, because they carry within themselves the harmony of the interior landscape and the exterior landscape. One reason writers become so anxious and even belligerent in the company of critics has to do with this harmony, this wholeness. If you ask me what one of my stories is about, I will sputter and stammer and, depending on how self-controlled I am, either give you a very childish, “Well, it’s about this girl who is jealous of her sister” Or I will cry

out: “If I could say what it was about in one sentence, why would I have spent nearly three years and 215 pages to tell it?” In my mind the story is not divisible or explainable. “Some people,” Flannery O’Connor says, “have the notion that you read the story and then climb out of it into the meaning, but for the fiction writer himself the whole story is the meaning, because it is an experience, not an abstraction.”<sup>7</sup>

I was asked not long ago to be my own critic, to write an article for a literary journal discussing the religious symbols that occur in my work. Now I would be surprised, not to say alarmed, if there were no religious symbols lurking about in my books. But to go poking around for them, tearing them from the flesh of the story, holding them up for examination—I’d almost sooner have my own cadaver cut open and the various organs exposed and prodded by a first-year medical student.

I get a similar chill when people speak to me of “Christian novels.” It may be because I spent a lot of my youth reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer, but, frankly, I tend to get a chill these days whenever I hear the word *Christian* used as an adjective. How narrowly we fence our turf, how jealously we guard this tiny plot. *Christian* as opposed to what? Christian as opposed to secular? But secular means of or pertaining to the world. We could in one sense term the Bible the most secular of books. It begins with the Creation of the world and ends with the re-creation of the world. It’s not a book about God in the abstract. It is about Emmanuel—God with us—God as he relates to this world and the people in it. The writer of fiction must of necessity be a secular artist. That is, the writer of fiction must be concerned with this world and with human experience in this world.

Shirley Hazzard tells the story of the painter Veronese, “who in 1572 was called before the Holy Office at Venice to explain why, in a painting of the Last Supper, he had included figures of loiterers, passers-by, people scratching themselves, deformed people, a man having a nosebleed and so on: details then held unfit to appear in a holy subject. When this grave charge of blasphemy was pressed on Veronese by the examiners, who asked him why he had shown such profane matters in a holy picture, he replied, ‘I thought these things might happen.’”

“Despite the many convoluted theories expended on the novelist’s material,” says Hazzard, “its essence is in those words.”<sup>8</sup>

Then is there no difference between the writer who lives by faith and the writer who does not? Yes, I think there is. But the difference is not that our world is more narrow but that our world is more broad. Again, it is Flannery O’Connor who has been able to put her finger on the difference.

“The novelist,” she says, “is required to create the illusion of a whole world with believable people in it, and the chief difference between the novelist who is an orthodox Christian and the novelist who is merely a naturalist is that the Christian novelist lives in a larger universe. He believes that the natural world contains the supernatural. And this doesn’t mean that his obligation to portray the natural is less; it means it is greater.”<sup>9</sup>

This is what Dostoyevsky did for Eugene Peterson. He enlarged his narrow world so that he could see himself and his congregation in the blazing light of God’s intentions. Those of us who take our faith seriously do not seek to trim the world to fit our narrow parochial concerns; we are, rather, constantly seeking to push out the artificial boundaries of our immediate knowledge and reach toward some glimpse, however partial, of those things that we cannot gaze upon face to face. And we must be constantly on guard, lest what we “know” become the limit for what we are able to see.

In his book *The Call of Stories*, Robert Coles says, “The whole point of stories is not ‘solutions’ or ‘resolutions’ but a broadening and even heightening of our struggles.”<sup>10</sup> I do not believe the young people of our wired world are looking to us for solutions or resolutions to their struggles, but certainly some of them know themselves to be what Barry Lopez calls “spirit[s] in disarray.”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps they would welcome from us a vision of who, in God’s sight, they really are, in a sharing of stories that illumine and heal.


Let me give you one last story.

I was at the airport to meet one of our children, and the plane, you won’t be surprised to know, was late. I finished what I was reading, got a drink of water, and stared at my fellow waiters. At last the plane’s arrival was announced, and we all stood up to surge toward the gate, straining our eyes for sight of the one passenger we longed to see.

I watched impatiently as the first few people come through, hardly glancing at them, but then a young man appeared who demanded my full attention. At least he seemed to be a young man. His hair was purple and green and orange and spiked to at least eight inches above his pasty, unhealthy looking face. Large rings hung from every visible orifice. On both wrists he wore bracelets composed of lethal metal thorns. His shirt and pants were black and skin tight. There was no sign of luggage or even a jacket. I was fascinated and, to tell the truth, a little frightened.

His eyes shifted back and forth. He was obviously expecting someone to meet him. I could hardly wait to see who it would be. I didn’t have to wait long. I had seen her earlier and noticed her—not because she was particularly noticeable but because she was quite ordinary—middle-class, graying,

unfashionably dressed, a bit overweight—in short, a woman very much like me. She was pushing her way through the crowd, calling out a name, and when she got to the boy, who was at least a foot taller than she was, she threw her arms around his waist with obvious joy.

I guess the thing that surprised me most was that she didn't betray the least embarrassment, claiming this child as her own. What I had seen as an almost menacing caricature, she knew to be her beloved son. "There's a story about that," I reminded myself, "a story I wasn't supposed to forget." 

## NOTES

1. Eugene Peterson, *Under the Unpredictable Plant* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1992), pp. 45, 49-50.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
3. Barry Lopez, "Story at Anaktuvak Pass," *Harper's*, December 1984, p. 52.
4. Jacob Bronowski, "The Reach of the Imagination," *The Norton Reader* (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 105.
5. Archibald MacLeish, the *New York Times*.
6. Exodus 33:11, 20-23.
7. Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manner* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1961), p. 73.
8. Shirley Hazzard, "We Need Silence to Find Out What We Think," in the *New York Times Book Review* (November 14, 1982), p. 11.
9. O'Connor, *Mystery and Manner*, p.175.
10. Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1989), p. 129.
11. Lopez, "Story at Anaktuvak Pass," p 52.