The Stamp Store

The stamp store had a wall of windows, and a glass door with a bell that clanked as it shut. On Saturdays, my allowance in hand, I sifted through the room, hoping to find a treasure in a penny box. I abhorred putting the stamps in books. Collecting bored me.

What I loved was soaking the stamp with its corner of envelope in warm water. It was a miracle that something so stuck could be coaxed to let go. With a little water, a little room, the stamp slipped from its place, effortlessly, and for the first time floated free.

Snow White

I was three when we drove to Minneapolis to see Snow White at the matinee. I knew the story, how she lived with seven dwarfs, how the wicked witch wanted to poison her.

Just as the witch handed Snow White the apple, I stood on my seat and screamed, "Don't eat the apple!"

She didn't hear me. She took a big, crunchy bite. I slid to the floor, where I stayed until the movie's end.

To this day, I don't remember if there was a kiss or a poison or a potion that saved her, if she lived with seven dwarfs, or if the wicked witch wanted to poison her. I only know it wasn't me.

When we were gods

Grandeau and his theater did.

But I was in the barn the day Lucy died. Fate didn't kill her.

Lucy was a good eater, she said. Some chickens just peck faster than others. Plus, Lucy was the friendliest chicken. She came to the door at breakfast, clucking and pecking until someone tossed her a crust of bread.

Lucy loved the kitchen. Spent much of the day in the garden outside the window, smelling Grandma's cooking. Grandma swore Lucy loved the smell of roasting chicken best. She was destined to be dinner, Grandma said.

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Flood

Of all that we lost in the flood, that damned cat Fisher, haunts me most. We were in Minneapolis visiting Melissa's mother when the levee broke. Left Fisher in the basement, to keep him out of trouble. I've never liked cats, but this was no way to die, clinging to a dusty, cobwebbed ceiling.

The river filled the attic. Left silt on everything. I dream about our house underwater, Trout slipping from room to room, catfish sucking algae off the television.

The Old Elm

In the corner of our front yard there was a giant Elm tree that our neighbor's son died under. Carefully, I'd look for the lightning's mark, a wound, the secret that explained why the old tree lived when Dennis died.

Did his mother, Mrs. Demars, stand at the kitchen window, rapping her fist on the glass, saying, "No Dennis! Didn't I tell you to never stand under a tree when there's lightning?" Was she as thin as a daisy then? Or did that come later, so that a slight breeze was all she needed to remove her from this earth?