

The pastor

by [Sydney Lea](#) in the [July 11, 2012](#) issue

*I have just one person left on earth who's been
My friend through grade school, high school, church, and sports,*
The pastor says. Meanwhile the winter rain
Explodes on the metal roof like handgun shots,

And it's hard to hear the man go on: *Thing is,*
He's lost his memory. There comes a catch
In his throat, a thing that no one here has witnessed
Through all his ministry. *Here's the trouble,* he adds,

I'm left alone with the things we knew together.
Silence ensues, save for a few quiet coughs,
And rustlings of the worship programs' paper.
Then the preacher seems to change his theme right off,

Speaking of Mary, and how she must have suffered
When her son referred to his apostolic peers
As family, not to her or his brothers,
Not to Joseph—as if he forgot the years

Spent in their household, as if he kept no thought
Of ties that bind. The congregants are old.
They try to listen, but their minds go wandering off
To things like the pounding rain outside, so cold

And ugly and loud. The storm, so out of season,
So wintry, still improbably recalls
The milder months, which vanished in a moment,
And which they summon vaguely, if at all.