

Once in a while we should say what is

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [November 11, 2015](#) issue

I was pawing through a shelf of books the other day  
When out fell a note from my late brother in his tiny  
Adamant wry inarguable crisp half-cursive-half-not  
Handwriting, and just for an instant I saw and heard  
Him at his desk, in his study, his mustache bristling,  
Black coffee half-cold, the burl of his body wrapped  
In the arms of the chair that held him for thirty years,  
A chair as big as a horse and twice as heavy. I *heard*  
Him, I tell you, I did, and I *saw* him, half-shadowed,  
Scribbling notes: his philatelic pursuits, notes for his  
Class next week, notes on a book he was going to do  
About Benedictine spirituality . . . then I was only me  
By the bookshelf again. But for a second I was in my  
Brother's study, watching him. It was late, everybody  
Was in bed, but not him, as usual he was up late with  
Coffee. He was wearing a sweater. The scritch of his  
Pen. His shoulders like boulders. The dim procession  
Of his books, organized by genre and author. He died  
Three years ago. But I saw him, absorbed, thoroughly  
Attentive, scrawling notes. There's way more possible  
Than we think possible; possible turns out to be a verb.  
I don't know how else to explain things like this. They  
Happen all the time to all of us and we hesitate to gape  
About them publicly because the words sound like pap,  
*Miracle* and *epiphany* and *vision*, you come off as nuts,  
A religious goober who talks to owls and addled saints.  
But you know and I know that this happens. I guess we  
Will always understandably be hesitant to chat about it,  
Which is fine, as no one enjoys being labeled a goober;  
But once in a while, like here, we should admit that it's  
Real, and it happens all the time, and it's scary and cool.

That's all. Once in a while we should gently say what is.