

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.