

Still, guy is the most inclusive and universally tender, taking the back of your neck in its creased palm and saying, "I'm counting on you." It's a promise and a threat, a stroke, a supplication, and a plea. If there were an epic poem of America in muscular four-beat Old English lines, our *Beowulf*, its first word would be not "*Hwaet*," but "Guy."

In other words, I tell Richie, "Sure." Watch him flirt with a girl? It won't be the first time. After clearing my place at the café table, I head outside to get a load of Richie's new car.

Deadguy

*What did God mean, arming him so insufficiently,
Sending him into the blue part of the flame?*

—Dean Young

Let's not call him the dead guy forever. His dying was so, what, harrowing? From *harve*, to torment. Or *herven*, to plunder. A harrow is also a farm tool with sharp teeth and a high school for rich kids and an area of London. What good are words? They lead everywhere but his death, which was indescribable, except to say that it felt distinctly deathlike. He gave a deadly and convincing performance of his own demise, my friend Zack. Isaac or Zack. Sometimes I said "Yitzy," wanting a name that was heartfelt and silly—to show that I loved him but that I was keeping my distance. The nurses called him Zachary, which drove him crazy.

His illness wasted him to a nub, and his body hung slack as a caught fish after you knife its belly and scoop out the slick handful of its insides. Except with a fish, you leave the meat. But Zack lost his flesh, too, his tissue and fat, and it would be right to gut his name, Isaac, and leave only a letter, like the bridge at the beginning

