

ABELON GRAVEYARD

He gave us a tour once. “Ghosts stare you down until there’s nothing you want but the truth,” Mr. Arnold, the graveyard watchman, confessed to me and my brother Michael.

“Kids, *here’s* a robber’s boots.” He pointed to tracks near the marble angels. (The robbers had hidden once in boxwoods and old yews.) What had brought them out? A coincidence of rainfall and underworld.

The robbery long ago, the coffin buried, it’s better to slip the inquest through. Mr. Arnold will tell you, in any case, that no one who digs here finds treasure: only specks of ordinary life, time’s chimera.

“The most you’ll fetch here is a psalm,” Mr. Arnold professed, scratching his black beard. I nodded suspiciously, inclined, as he was, to watch, to question the ghosts who displaced stones in lieu of fashioning personas.

“The dark isn’t total,” Mr. Arnold conceded—not even here in the cemetery, among the epitaphs and leaves. “Lord! Look at all the shoveling I’ve done, boys and girls! Guess I’ll manage with the wheelbarrow...”

It’s too bad ours is such a lonely planet, and God, the spin doctor of shadows.