

# Choose Your Own Belief: Of Sharks, Art, & God

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## Introduction

Since *hope is a thing with feathers that perches in the soul,*  
Then, belief is the feather vane  
holding it together.

And what you believe may be what I know  
or, the other way around.  
Maybe we don't believe at all.

## Chapter I

Sharks are evil  
which is why you will never swim with them—  
*especially* not while caged—  
where in a moment of weakness, you might dare open your eyes  
only to meet up close a steely one of theirs  
as they stealth-swim inches from your prison  
and you forfeit a piece of your soul.

*If you believe, go on to Chapter II*

*If not, go directly to Chapter IX*

## Chapter II

When we finally  
 evolve  
 to access the other two thirds of our brain  
 the human race will actually begin to  
 devolve.

Until then  
 equality among us remains a dream  
 governed by Hypnos from his ebony bed in Hades,  
 sprinkled by Mr. Sandman, who is probably wearing a letterman's jacket,  
 and captured in the BFG's jar for safekeeping.

So for now  
 education is both your life force and poison.

*If you believe, go on to Ch. III*

*If not, skip to Ch. V*

## Chapter III

Even though you will never really give up Diet Coke  
 you still believe in yourself on the whole

so you

Keep stopping at parks to swing  
 Keep talking to your children (who are eating chicken and rice) about  
 current events  
 Keep dreaming of the art scene in Seattle  
 Keep dreaming of life in NYC where you've only visited, but know you belong  
 Keep vacuuming the house even when no one is coming over

Keep studying Psalms and Mosiah for clues  
Keep questioning “truth”  
Keep reading poetry in place of therapy  
Keep selfishly teaching the art of communication to one day master it yourself  
Keep spending more time alone  
Keep finding babies in your dreams

*Go on to Ch. IV*

## Chapter IV

You want to

see more

read more

write more

sky.

*If you agree, go to Ch. V*

*If not, skip to Ch. VI*

## Chapter V

You live in a world where President Trump is fact and the world of Harry Potter is fiction. You believe the opposite.

*If you're for Trump, go back to Ch. I*

*If you're for HP, go on to Ch. VI*

## Chapter VI

Believing in people feels a little bit like not knowing whether the eventual, promised drop on your rafting trip is a three-foot dip over a gurgly rapid, or a fifty foot, cataractous plunge of body-swallowing doom.

*But you still do.*

You believe in them, because, for example, you think there's a researcher out there, who has discovered the cure for cancer, and keeps it from the world, carrying her burden alone. She has decided to protect us from it, because the method for the cure is more horrific than the disease.

*Thank you. (You're sorry.)*

*If you think it might be true, go on to Ch. VII*

*If not, go to Ch. IX*

## Chapter VII

You don't believe  
 that this is all there is—  
 this one life—  
 the last ounce of water on a desert hike  
 the last seventh grader picked during PE square dancing  
 or even the last time you saw the one you were never supposed to love.

No,  
 there is more—  
 an alternate universe where  
 Michael Jackson's secret children

spend their days choreographing and performing  
brilliant art  
you might never see.

And that's just the beginning of  
more.

*Believers go on to Ch. VIII  
Non-believers, The End*

## Chapter VIII

Trees talk to each other  
through their root systems.

Whether old  
deep and intricate  
as the wrinkles on a centurion's face  
or new  
weak and growing  
like the fingers of a newborn's hand

they talk.

With vibrations they stir their ocean of dirt  
sending waves we can't feel to trees in other lands.

They praise their Creators  
and they sing  
of oxygen and water and sun.

They whisper stories  
about predators  
like us.

It's happening underneath you.

*Move on to Ch. IX*

## Chapter IX

God is

Heavenly Mother,  
who, pregnant with her Earth belly  
liked you even when you were thirteen  
and Heavenly Father,  
who you have pictured all your life resting on a throne  
but you know now is more active than that  
and the Holy Spirit,  
who sometimes settles behind your ribcage  
and fills you from the center outward with liquefied light,  
and your brother, Jesus Christ,  
who took one for the whole team  
and yet somehow would walk just you home  
carrying your backpack, as you hop over sidewalk cracks.

They are  
one word.

*Either way, The End*