

# JOSEPH YOUNG called

# GOD NOT OTHERWISE

## **First Certainty,** ***Ailanthus Tree***

It was the kind of city he might bear, the river, the beautiful sidewalks, the pregnant dogs. He'd watch the flies and in their wings find things like braided water. *See that tree*, said a boy. He followed the arm, up the trunk, to the crown. *Yes?* He waited, sharp for completion, the short ash of the sky.

## **Second Certainty,** ***Physic***

To begin with, there was the girl in the gold dress, the angle of her collarbone in the heat. There was the man in the red jumpsuit too, steady hands on the wheels and levers of things. Both were fixed, imprinted with light against the backdrop. He felt himself shimmer, knees unbuckle, the sun's neat sugarpill.

## **Interlude 1**

At 4, the crew forgot the shovels. None of them would notice. They'd eat dinner, nearly holding to their forks.

## **Interlude 2**

The woman unlocked the glass door, the fragile moment she smelled books.

## **Interlude 3**

They fought, the blood from her nose washing the boy's feet.

## **Third Certainty,** ***Heartbreak***

Under the stairs a bottle stood. It took the light of the afternoon and cooled it, green and powdered. He saw it through his parted feet, the red-cracked boards. It ignored him, hard beyond glass, still beyond touch.

## **Fourth Certainty,** ***Right Time***

He shared a cigarette with the dentist, who'd just pulled a tooth, the nurse from next door. *I have a man inside*, she said, *with a tumor in his eye*. They stopped, marked the quiet of the suffering train.