SQUIRREL PARK

Sean McGrath

"He's either gonna be a super saiyan or a school shooter one day," I remember one of us saying.

"He can't be a super saiyan, he's black!" another howled across the park, loud enough for everyone to hear. We erupted in complicity.

The boy in subject was standing on the tallest rock in the only park in town. I hadn't even realized you could climb the tank-sized boulder, but there he was at the top on a noisy afternoon in the spring. Looking out over the park, he stood grunting, drawing in energy through the sun-splashed granite and hurling it outward at his targets. He swayed on his foundations, rooted to the rock, hollering and heaving like a video game character, his bolts of whatever slicing the dark world into shards.

He actually yelled this last piece: "slice the dark world!" We howled louder, kicked some rocks.

Years later, when we had come into adulthood, I looked the boy on the boulder up, but he couldn't be found. It was like that

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with a lot of the Orchard boys, gone away with little trace or mark behind them.

When I returned to the Orchard for holiday I went to that park on a snowy night. There was smoke in my breathing and the boulder was tipped in a white dust that had come through the pines. I climbed to the top, slipping several times before making my way on hands and knees. My hand brushed over some of the powder that had fallen. “Richard” was carved? burned? etched? into the rock. How? Some strange force at work, preserving it there over time. That was the boy’s name – Richard.

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