

The Prairie Light Review

Volume 13
Number 1 *The Dreaming Tree*

Article 58

Winter 3-1-1994

Not All There

Margaret Segal
College of DuPage

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr>

Recommended Citation

Segal, Margaret (1994) "Not All There," *The Prairie Light Review*: Vol. 13 : No. 1 , Article 58.
Available at: <https://dc.cod.edu/plr/vol13/iss1/58>

This Selection is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at DigitalCommons@COD. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Prairie Light Review by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@COD. For more information, please contact orenick@cod.edu.

Not All There

by Margaret Segal

“He’s not all there.” That’s what everyone said about Joey, anyway. He’d been born behaving strangely, his eyes darting intently from one spot to the next, hands flaying the air in weird, unnatural chops, and disjointed, almost incarnate noises slipping from his lips.

The other kids made fun of him, of course, feeling it was fair game since he didn’t understand anything anyway - or so they thought. The adults looked at him with that cruel mixture of revulsion and pity, secretly wondering how the hell his parents coped with him, and even more secretly ecstatic that they didn’t have to.

Joey’s life passed along with the years. His parents had known all along, of course, that he’d never grow up in any real sense of the phrase. Yet one day they finally stared in the face the dirty, painful truth that there would be no reprieve for them — no relief at his going out into the world as a young man to make it on his own. On that day the invisible chains began forming around their ankles, until on their all too rare walks alone together they shuffled like the prisoners they were.

One day, Joey got out of the house by himself - somehow, this had never happened before. He went careening and flailing out into the streets, his grunts of pleasure rising into the air, an expression of pure, clear joy making, for a moment, almost beautiful the jumbled features of his face. The truck tried to stop - they always do.

Pretty much the whole town came to the funeral - collective guilt and pity, I guess. The minister tried so hard to speak eloquently of the injustices of this world, yet of how in the beauty of the great beyond, God’s perfect peace and joy and justice would prevail, and Joey would finally be free. Pretty much everyone believed him, except the two hunched in the corner closest to the casket, pale and dazed in the sick exhaustion of the wicked mixture, grief and relief.

“Give them time,” the chief of police said - “they’ll get over it.” No one believed him.

Sometimes even not all there is better than nothing.