

The song sparrow

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [January 6, 2016](#) issue

Walked out to the car this morning to find a small brown
Bird deceased on the windshield. A young song sparrow,
Neither naked gawky nestling nor chesty feathered elder;
A sort of a teenager, I guess. Cause of death not instantly
Evident, nor did I spend time determining its gender; no,
My brain got stuck on the teenager part. It's so fearsome,
Being a teenager. Everything is ten times louder. They're
Braver and stupider than any three older people; they *are*
Three people, most of the time. This is discombobulating
In the extreme. But we have no sympathy for them. We'd
Prefer to forget we were them; we deny that we ever were.
You know we do. If we wrote our histories we would skip
From twelve to twenty, from generally bucolic childhood,
At least fitfully, at least while finding refuge from trouble,
To beginner older idiocy, which itself takes a decade or so.
We get so impatient with teenagers. We want them to leap
Past stupid. But stupid is a great teacher, isn't it? Flailing
At least teaches you what alleys to avoid, if at all possible.
We have no mercy on them but they are in a thunderstorm,
And probably it seems like it will never end, and we whine
That they are wet yet again even after we advised as re wet.
And how wet we were too, brothers and sisters, how moist
And soaked and sopping and bedraggled we were, not even
Fully feathered at the time, trying to figure out how to soar,
And where to soar, and who, if anyone, would soar with us;
And if we were blessed we had parents, maybe parents who
Loved us even, but so often they just stood and sermonized
As we fell out of the nest, frightened and thrilled and lonely.