

Once in a while we should say what is

by [Brian Doyle](#) in the [November 11, 2015](#) issue

I was pawing through a shelf of books the other day
When out fell a note from my late brother in his tiny
Adamant wry inarguable crisp half-cursive-half-not
Handwriting, and just for an instant I saw and heard
Him at his desk, in his study, his mustache bristling,
Black coffee half-cold, the burl of his body wrapped
In the arms of the chair that held him for thirty years,
A chair as big as a horse and twice as heavy. I *heard*
Him, I tell you, I did, and I *saw* him, half-shadowed,
Scribbling notes: his philatelic pursuits, notes for his
Class next week, notes on a book he was going to do
About Benedictine spirituality . . . then I was only me
By the bookshelf again. But for a second I was in my
Brother's study, watching him. It was late, everybody
Was in bed, but not him, as usual he was up late with
Coffee. He was wearing a sweater. The scritch of his
Pen. His shoulders like boulders. The dim procession
Of his books, organized by genre and author. He died
Three years ago. But I *saw* him, absorbed, thoroughly
Attentive, scrawling notes. There's way more possible
Than we think possible; possible turns out to be a verb.
I don't know how else to explain things like this. They
Happen all the time to all of us and we hesitate to gape
About them publicly because the words sound like *pap*,
Miracle and *epiphany* and *vision*, you come off as nuts,
A religious goober who talks to owls and addled saints.
But you know and I know that this happens. I guess we
Will always understandably be hesitant to chat about it,
Which is fine, as no one enjoys being labeled a goober;
But once in a while, like here, we should admit that it's
Real, and it happens all the time, and it's scary and cool.

That's all. Once in a while we should gently say what is.