

Him and his Father

by Kevin Hunter

Snow was falling. People passed by the window and wore large coats. Inside, Alex stood in front of the window and watched. A glass of warm coffee was in his hand and by his side was his dog. With his free hand Alex gently brushed through Spike's hair. Then the dog rolled to his side and left Alex to himself. The house was empty and dark—the only light, the small lit candle by his side on the window sill. His face was lightly brightened by the flame. He had argued with his father.

I should have answered him, thought Alex. He gave me every chance but I couldn't. I'm an atheist. I'm a Buddhist. There, and that would have been it. It was easy. Simple. But I didn't. And he walked, and what do I do now. Mother, what do I do now?

Alex sat down in the chair that was behind him. I shouldn't have said it, he thought. Of course she's gone to a better place. What else did I expect from him? I should have left it there. He would laugh and we would have moved past it, and I would be here and he would be here, and it would be fine. It was so easy—so simple, Alex thought. What else could I have said, though? She's not in a better place. He would not have asked if I had lied. And I should have answered him when he asked me. Of course I'm an atheist. And if you spent more time with your family and not your church you would have known it. But what difference would that—I guess it would have made none. I should have answered him though.

Spike got up and brushed his head under Alex's free hand, and Alex petted him and thought of his father, and of the snow that fell and of the people that passed.

