

Somewhere, an angel is trying to purchase a toaster from Wal-Mart.

It always rains when it happens, though it seems like the purchase occurs only once a year—twice at most. The exquisite moderation in toaster purchases made by angels has been noted throughout the centuries. Usually, They enter the hallowed halls of your local Wal-Mart, doors creakily opening and closing by themselves, at a sensible time—around eight or nine p.m.—perhaps after a late dinner.

Tonight, They had sugary pasta. Melting through Their fingers, handfuls of bow-shaped dough were gently scooped onto Their plate. Doubtful that an angel can finish the entire meal, hungry as They might be, the plate will join the rest of the week's meals in the fridge: clementines dipped in honey and eggshells, sliced pears and dental floss, a single proud piece of bread soaked in apricot jam.

After sprinkling a perfectly normal amount of sugar on each spoonful, They contemplated the idea of Their kitchen countertop adorned with more than just the stacked tower of cheese graters grazing the cabinets, scratching pristine white paint on rotting wood. And so, tonight, They will buy a toaster.

The fluorescent lighting lining the ceiling, humming steadily, will emanate a strange, familiar warmth, making the entire experience of going to a Wal-Mart for everyone else at least ten times more unsettling. But it is late evening, the store is humming in tandem with a strange new rhythm and a radiant glow has washed over the cold, gray concrete floor. Footsteps irregularly pitter patter in the kitchen supplies aisle – an angel is buying a toaster tonight.

They'll flag down some poor soul ambling around in a blue vest, nametag slightly askew from the ten crates of tangerines he had to unpack, eyes sunken from the conversation about which kind of peanut butter is the best with the weird lady who keeps coming around to chat every Friday, hands shaky and hair fried.

And They'll listen to the worker drone on about how, really, the cheapest one will do you well, and They will feel the bone-deep exhaustion seeping from his lanyard cheerily screaming in a Comic Sans font: "how can I help YOU?" with the Wal-Mart logo cynically staring back at Them. They'll wait for the conversation to end. Patiently. A virtuous exercise in customer service.

An angel will smile peacefully at the depressing line-up of dust-covered, unplugged models, each claiming they've invented a new kind of toasting technique. The bland metal coloring of the boxes shines a little brighter tonight, though, and They will peer at their reflection on the side of one of the machines, sighing softly, remembering Home. In Their distorted reflection on badly-polished metal, They see Themselves in His image again, for just a moment – an inexplicable heartbeat stutters deep within Them. Flesh stretching out like silk fabric, for kilometers into the distance. A quiet and soft expansion blanketing an

edgeless red sky. A hundred thousand eyes staring back at Them, lovingly blinking like clock chimes in the middle of the night.

When the Wal-Mart employee comes by, looking incredibly put-upon by having to help Them pick a toaster, They will waste no time asking: Which one makes the bread the toastiest? Do any of them make that satisfying ding! sound once the bread pops out? Will one particular model help remove the sickening taste of honey and vodka in my mouth? Is there a toaster that helps with homesickness? Will this one make a toasted slice that will finally make my teeth feel sharp enough? Is there an option to make only burned slices? Until ash itself seeps out of every pore of this device's circuitry?

He'll have checked out of this line of questioning by the third sentence. He tells Them to get the one on sale. It works quite well for the price, and it won't be on sale tomorrow, so They should buy it now. They'll smile and nod, eyes trained up to the ceiling. The lights are flickering, as if signaling Them to leave.

It will take a while to checkout; the line-up is long, and people are angry. Angry that they're here, but also angry because there isn't much to be happy about at nine p.m. on a Friday night these days. But an angel is purchasing a toaster tonight. They go to pay and it takes a bit before They pull out a wallet. The ache is back, right in between Their shoulder-blades. It feels like an annoying itch, but it burns like someone put a hot iron to Their back.

Someone did, eons ago. And in the wreckage of Their fall, when They felt the blinding pain of materialization, of the creation of this unwanted body, They wept. They thought, and thought, forming images through fleshy circuits limited by linearity: What are these smells? How can these fingers feel wet earth? Can these eyes capture the enormity of My sinful desire? They pulled me apart, admonishing Me for the want I sheltered within Me like a radioactive core. What is the shape of this punishment? What is the shape of this Problem?

They will murmur an apology and pay for Their toaster with a credit card with no name on it. The cashier quickly informs Them of the return policy and pushes the toaster to the side, calling for the next person.

(Angels commit credit card fraud often, but it does not count.)

They will walk out into the rain again. The doors will open and close with a stutter, as if the mechanics of it all became confused at what just walked through. It's pouring by the end of an angel's purchase of a toaster. The rain comes down like furious tears, sliding down the sides of buildings and trees and the little concrete bumps on the parking lot.

They take a deep breath and hold on to the burning feeling.

They disappear down the street.