Thomas Eldredge

<u>God's Lemon</u>

Outside it was raining lemon juice again. Father Agmond told all the students that the hand of god squeezed the giant shining lemon in the sky whenever he wanted everyone to go inside.

"Why does god care if we're inside or outside?" Randall, a particularly bright student asked.

"Do not question god's plan Randall." Replied Father Agmond. Several of the students jeered Randall for his impudence. "Enough of that students, Randall has an inquisitive mind, which god gave him. It is up to us to steer his thoughts towards righteousness. That is your assignment class; to find ways in which inquisitive minds might be enlightened in their questioning, to bring curiosity into the path of god." Father Agmond then dismissed the class.

Randall walked outside into the acidic rain. He could feel the mild stinging as each hydonium ion reacted with the oils on his skin. His eyes were drawn upwards into the lattice of light from the giant lemon refracting through the trillions of misty droplets of juice. He opened his eyes wide and exposed the soft ocular gelatin to the burning fluid. He reveled in the cleansing pain.

"Randall, do not open your eyes to the rain." Father Agmond was suddenly beside Randall, soaked. His face turned upward to the light but his eyes were tightly shut.

"Father, I meant no disrespect in class." Randall turned to the ground, his wet hair cascading down across his face in sticky tendrils.

"I know son, I know, and there is much for you to know too, but you must ask the right questions the right way. There is no danger in asking questions as long as you never reveal what it is you want to know."

Randall looked into Father Agmond. Pastors always spoke in riddles, but never before heard a question which required a riddle for an answer.

"You wish me to find god by asking questions?"

"No, but you do."

"How do I find god by asking questions?"

"By asking them." Father Agmond slapped his shirt pocket, which had filled with rain juice. The juice spurted up into his eyes, blinding him. He laughed as he cleared his eyes and nose.

"I am afraid to ask what I want to know." Randall said.

"Then start by knowing what you want to ask."

"I want to know why the rain juice burns our skin, and why we can see the shining lemon and the juice but not the hand that squeezes it. I want to know where god lives. I want to know if there are other lemons and if god can squeeze them all or if there are other gods who squeeze those lemons."

Father Agmond put his arm around Randall. "There are dishonest ways to find truth and honest ways to tell lies." He turned Randall towards the church's schoolhouse. "Some people need giant lemons." Then he turned back towards the horizon. "Some people need to find out where all the giant lemons come from. Find out all you can about the giant lemons, just don't take them away from the people that need them. If you try to

take the lemons away, you'll know more enemies than truth." Father Agmond turned and strode away carrying a casual grace with each step.

Randall stood still, looking up with his eyes closed. He felt the warmth from the sun in each drop.

God's telling you to go inside, Randall thought to himself. He looked back to the schoolhouse and wondered why everyone was so eager to do what god wanted without ever knowing why. He guessed it was because they really cared more about what everybody else wanted than what god wanted. Randall felt alone for he first time since he'd started school, truly alone. Randall didn't want to be alone, but he wanted to understand. Do I have to be alone to understand god?

Randall turned his face upwards again and opened his mouth. He tasted the rain, it was sour, overwhelmingly, but the taste curled his lips into a smile, a smile which god sent him by way of a giant lemon. Randall knew god had sent him a smile, so he set out to find out why god wanted him to smile.

When Randall returned from the rain he was wet and smiling.

"What the hell are you smiling at?" A student called to Randall.

"God's plan." Randall replied.