“Watson, come here. I want you,” Bell said, and Watson came running like a boy. What son wouldn’t come to a father like that, ringing with delight, his acid tongue turning into sound? And Sherlock’s boy Watson came running as well, dim bulb, sure thing, everything elementary except to him, the watts on his fixture lower than the norm. He took joy at being called, simple as that, the sea of questions, demands, each one hounding him, swirling like a thousand Copley sharks. It didn’t even matter what it was that he was called for.

As if Holmes, all his what’s and why’s, his withering condescension, which was uncalled for, was where the heart was. As if Watson were some winsome college boy from Whatsamatta U., some wind-up cosmic toy, some budding Lou Costello running through the abattoir of his father’s laughter to answer every hello with what he knew about *What’s on second*, *Who’s on first*, the Watson family crick in his neck, his DNA, the queries growing louder (“What, Son? What, Son?”), the tom-tom golfing, clubbing in his head whenever anyone acidulously said, “What’s on your mind, Son? What is it, exactly?”

“Nothing,” Son said, though he came to wish that everyone would hold the phone, would just drop dead, or that, finally, at wit’s end, Holmes would buy a clue, put a bullet through his head.

What is it fathers want? Someone to be in on it with, a co-conspirator?

Someone to be included in insubstantial joy? Someone to be lording over?

Or just someone so as not to be alone, spirit descending, to abandon, deride—what son of a bitch? what son of mine?—some white sun day, some Whitsuntide?