

In "God's House," Elaine writes of the first person experience of a girl in Heaven. The piece is rich in metaphors about living a Christian life and, through its composition, Elaine was able to explore her own beliefs on the afterlife.

*~Reneé Carter, Master Tutor*

### **God's House**

By Elaine Grishaber

I went to Heaven once and it wasn't what I expected. There were no fluffy clouds or pillars of white. I saw rolling, sloping hills and felt the slip of wet dust beneath my feet. I looked up and didn't see a glowing, glimmering halo hanging in an arch about my head and was somewhat disappointed. I wasn't wearing white either. Instead I had a pair of worn, old trousers that were sprinkled with tiny slivers of wood – sawdust. I reached down and rolled some of the stuff between my fingers.

I heard the grass beside me drift and sway, and turned my head. What I saw was a middle-aged man, as worn and old as my trousers. His lips curved upward, and I could see his smile in the corners of his eyes.

"Hello," He greeted kindly.

I nodded shyly in reply. He looked at me, concerned.

"Do you understand where you are? Who I am?" He asked.

I nodded once more. Somehow I knew this was God.

We walked along the sloping green hills for a while. God said nothing and let me take in the surroundings. He led me to a small, modest-looking building.

"This is my House." God said.

I must have given him a disapproving look because he chuckled and said: "It needs to be fixed up a bit."

I frowned deeply. "You want me to fix it? I don't know how..."

God's eyes smiled again, and He produced a hammer and handed it to me. I received it hesitantly, unsure of myself.

"I brought you here for a reason," He told me, firmly but not cruelly. "But you won't be staying around for long. I'm just the Architect. I only do the plans for my House. I need you to help maintain it."

Nodding my head a third time, I gripped the hammer firmly and approached the House. As I moved closer I noticed a small Gate, rusted and damaged. I opened it, and its hinges creaked horribly. I glanced back at God, who stood on a knotted knoll of grass a few meters away.

“That Gate hasn’t been used in a long while,” He shouted an explanation to me.

I looked back towards the Gate and noticed a small inscription etched delicately into the metal:  
*Prayer.*

I continued towards the House. God was right—it really was in need of repair. I worked hard, but I can’t remember for how long. God supervised my work silently. I gave the House new windows, new shingles, even new siding. When I was done, God’s House looked brilliant on the outside. I was just about to begin work on the inside when God stopped me.

“It’s not the time for you to go inside yet. But you’ve done a great job on the exterior,” He said.

I smile. “Thanks.”

God warmed me with yet another smile. “Thank you.”

He began to lead me away, but I turned and glimpsed back at the Gate. It stood out now, still rusted and dirty, contrasting with the radiance of God’s House.

“Do you want me to fix the Gate too?” I asked, unwilling to leave.

God paused and looked back, seemingly puzzled. “Oh, no.” He said. “That will fix itself when you get back. Just wait.”

I woke up in the hospital bed with the white sheets spread thinly across my bandaged legs. My mom said that the other driver had a seizure, that it was an accident. I listened, because it was all I can do at that time. And I thought of God’s House. I missed the feel of wood in my hands. I missed the pound of the hammer. And I thought of the Gate.

Six months later my physical therapy is finished, and I’m able to do something I’ve longed to do since I woke up, but couldn’t. After six months, my bones have been joined together again, and my joints have mended. I kneel and I pray. I never did that before the accident. But now I know that my work in heaven isn’t finished. I think of the rusted Gate, in need of repair, and about to receive it.

“Amen,” I say, and I smile.

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