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THE BIG DEEP VOICE OF GOD

That morning Tommy Rodriguez heard a voice, so he piled his family into the car and headed down the interstate. "Take off your clothes," he ordered after a while. And because Tommy had heard the voice, maybe the big, deep voice of God, they all obeyed, watched shirts and underpants fly out the window, twisting and turning like strange desert birds.

Around noon, Tommy's wife began to wonder. She hadn't heard the voice but thought if she did it would call her "Sugar." "Sugar," it would say, "your thighs are hives of honey, and I am the Bumble Bee of Love." Quivering slightly, she pressed her left cheek against warm blue vinyl.

At home she often wondered too. There, on those late summer evenings, she leaned across the sink into still white clouds of steam and listened. Opening her mouth, she always took in more than air and water.

Tommy drove a little faster, beyond the vast and restless sand, a failing sunset, the tangled fists of tumbleweed. In the backseat, Grandpa whined, and Aunt Maria began to pee. Tommy closed his eyes. He was sure salvation was just one billboard or gas pump away, sure the voice was whispering now. "Drive like the wind," it was telling him, "like a wild saint in the Texan wind."