

The Night I Learned How Not to Pray

Iris DeMent

I was laying on my belly on the middle of the living room floor
I was watching Howdy Doody so Im guessin it was right around four
When I saw my baby brother tumblin from the top of the stairs
He was lying limp and silent and the blood was tricklin through his shiny hair
When my mom saw little brother, she said Hon, youd better run and get your dad.
Her voice was high and she was shaking so I knew that this was bad
We stood out by the mailbox watchin her and dad and brother drive away
And I didnt waste no time, I got down on my knees right there, and I began to pray
I prayed into the evening never even took the time to have a bite
I was sure if I prayed hard enough that God would make it right
We were at the kitchen table long past bedtime when we finally got that call
And I knew that it was over when my sister slammed that phone against the wall
That was the night I learned how not to pray Cause God does what he wants to anyway
I never did tell my mother and I kept it from my sisters and all my brothers
But that was the night I learned how not to pray
It was forty-one years later when I took my brothers picture out of a box
I hung it on the wall, sat across from him and I began to talk
When the evening started, I didnt know what I was going say
But before the night was over Id told him all about how Id learned not to pray

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