

## **The Wordsmith**

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The steady report of metal on paper. Blackened fingers pounding out the crafted sentence on a Smith Corona manual. Sweat beading upon his forehead, his eyes focused but squinting, bloodshot, lips moving but silent. The ribbon jams and as the white-out dries, the Wordsmith scratches out his living in pencil, making notes, sleeve soiled by layers of graphite; his desk littered with eraser crumbs. Balls of paper at his feet covered with untamed thoughts, second-guesses, viciously slashed paragraphs. They fall now and then, like great drops of blood.

The pencil returns to his clenched teeth, a bit with an unseen bridle. Now the keys' sharp rapping once again. He feels the thought bending to his will, to his fingers, to the paper.

The night darkens and then lightens slowly to early morning. The coffee is still warm, but the taste is gone, lost in the deadline. The Wordsmith gathers the stack of his soul's travail and slides it into a coarse brown envelope looping the rough string from button to button. He showers, shaves, takes care to shine his shoes. He is wrinkled but on time. The editor smiles, the Wordsmith blinks and declines a hot cup of coffee.

As he walks to breakfast there is no sign of his night at the forge. The ringing of the anvil has ceased as he sits with his bagel at a table for two. While fresh people snap in and out, he pulls a journal from his jacket, twists his father's Cross pen and lets it hover above the blank page.