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### Development: Step 31

I had nearly memorized the alphabet when it became evident that nothing mattered. I had a soul. I couldn't remove that leather from my shoe. I trod on it. I washed it in a rain cloud. Anyway, it was here and meant to stay here. I thought: well, my whole life I've looked in the closet for the wrong scarf. Here it is, cold outside and I'm searching for a noose. No one appreciated my tie on Sunday. At church, everyone looked at me as if the bulging veins in my neck were rattlesnakes. Some could see the color of the scales bleeding through. My epidermis was thin. Like everything, I was nearly see-through and reminded myself of a paper lamp shade and the light bulb inside was the thing I kept trying to hide.

Peter Davis



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## After Re-Finishing

I had a feeling the chemicals in the air  
were affecting me.  
It took me a long time to find my shoes.  
I couldn't work my fingers  
and left them untied.  
I smelled something cooking.  
Ah, fear.  
Around me, like schools of fish swarming,  
bees with stingers, stinging.  
Mean-spirited birds sharpening talons.  
I jumped at the thought of my body.  
I was scared of my imagination.  
Here I was,  
a grown man with a wife and child,  
a home and dog,  
a sense of dread like a lost eyelash,  
causing me to blink and  
check the closets with a clenched fist.  
Fireworks in the distance sounded  
like sealed jars shattering.  
I tried to buck up.  
I reassured myself. "You're fine," I said.  
But inside,  
I knew something was different.  
No longer was I able to navigate  
the strange cave that led

to my bedroom. Instead,  
like a bottle rocket spiraling  
through the attic, I bounced  
around in seizure.  
Gods peered down from  
the edge of a distant heaven.  
One even blew  
a nose  
in a tear-soaked handkerchief.

Peter Davis

Peter Davis lives and teaches in Muncie, Indiana. He has a sweet wife, a beautiful son, and a loyal dog. Barnwood Press recently published an online chapbook of his poems, *In the States*, and he is the editor of *Poet's Bookshelf: Contemporary Poets on Books that Shaped Their Art*, also from Barnwood.