I’ve made a terrible mistake and have driven my family to one of New York State’s many Fundamentalist Resorts: resorts where Fundamentalists go to relax.

Needless to say, only Fundamentalists are permitted to enter.

The resorts are embassies of extremism, sovereign territories of Leisure and Law.

Those who attend them are more Fundamental than any creed. There is no question of doctrine. There are no Christians or Muslims or Jews: only Fundamentalists whose Fundamentalism surpasses all others.

The Fundamentalists speak a language foreign to me, even though I speak all languages.

As we exit the car, four tremendous guards hurl themselves on me. My wife and daughter are torn from my side.

I am examined, inspected, interrogated.

The guards search my bags for items that would prove my piety, asking — now in English — about my toiletries.
Indeed, they are obsessed with my toiletries’ insufficiency.

“These toiletries are for you!” they shout, between scoffs and curses.

I feel a pang of shame as I look at the items they’ve laid out on the bed.

“Why do I need such things just to —?”

“Where!” they interrupt my thought, “Where are the toiletries for God?”

At my despair, which they misinterpret as confusion, they kneel and mime a ritual of ablation—one performed a thousand times each day—with wide eyes and gaping mouths, drawing my attention to the cleaning of the face and ears.

I understand their question and their enactment, but I have no answer.

I have no toiletries for God, nor to cleanse myself to appear before God.

“I just take showers,” I think. “And use Q-tips.”

My family will be spared, but I will be killed.

Everyone knows I am not Fundamental.

I know it myself.

The question is how I have allowed myself to trespass into a Fundamental domain.

I begin to believe that I deserve my punishment.
In this moment, I sense that I am, at heart, a Fundamentalist.

But it is too late.

As I am hoisted up and carried away like Jesus, I hear the sounds of gentle fountains, children laughing, and people splashing in the Resort’s clear, immaculate pools.