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# One of the Five Wise Virgins Gives a Toast at the Party for the Prodigal Son

by Nicole Hardy

Sure, I'm glad you're back  
but how hard is it to come home

when the money's gone?  
I'll raise my glass to your brother

instead, to knowing what it's like  
playing every rule, waiting

days tasting shades of vanilla  
for the promised Christmas bonus

always good always home instead  
of upstairs with whoever's asking

fence-sitting on a fall somewhere  
in the gray between always good

always home, the words say themselves  
in the same night-prayer for who

knows how long how many years  
just in case He's still listening:

*Dear God, please. Please.*

