

BURN BARREL

A girl is throwing trash at the flames. Anything that will burn. Plastic milk jugs, cardboard boxes, the electric panels of broken toys and the needled syringes her mother uses to shoot insulin into her thighs. The fire smolders, gray-to-black-to-purple, mutating into a green plume like the peacock feather she bought when her class took a trip to the zoo. She slips a caramel between her lips, stolen from her grandmother's pink candy dish. She watches snow fall and the wind blow across the mouth of the barrel, whistling smoke into a field of corn-stubble, shading a trail to the edge of the woods where each day it grows dark a little earlier. She hears the snowplow on the county road, sees sparks as the blade strikes asphalt. When her stick stirs what's left of the flames, she feels the sugar in her body rise against the barrel that warms her. She feeds the fire that melts the sky.

