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## The Stag and the Winter Wood

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# The Stag and the Winter Wood

Braun: The Stag and the Winter Wood

A white sky  
watched over the winter wood.

In that great forest of the North,  
the pines were donned with snowy  
cloaks. Maples and oaks  
silently cradled hoarfrost.  
Chickadees and sparrows  
had long turned south with chilled wings.  
Muffled by an afghan of snow,  
the winter wood waited  
for the icy crunch  
of hooves.

Weaving between the trees,  
a stag  
ambled through the winter wood.  
His shoulders were tall and broad.  
His antlered crown  
spread wide.  
He moved with grace past the firs and  
cedars, never once dipping his proud  
head.  
Every branch bent and bowed  
as he passed.

For how long the forest had awaited his  
return was unknown,  
for in the motionless winter wood,  
time seemed without boundary.  
Each day  
was as long as a life-age of the earth.  
But as the stag moved through the  
wood, winter

The hemlocks  
dripped as they stretched their limbs,  
finally free of their frosty burdens.  
The loons  
returned home on warmed wings  
and the air filled with song.  
The forest once again  
danced with light and life.

The stag pushed further  
through the wood,  
past the blooming honeycrisps  
and snowy lady's slippers  
until finally  
the thicket of the forest faded.  
He stepped into a wide clearing,  
where at the center stood a rebellious structure  
of stone  
and steel.

The hope and joy found in spring  
were soon lost.  
Darker  
machinations  
were at work.  
An ominous lifeform  
now occupied the wood.  
Black smoke rose from a tall column  
and stained  
the sky.

## About Kyle Braun

Kyle Braun is a graduate student in English at the University of North Dakota. He grew up on a farm in northwest Minnesota and enjoys spending time outside. When Kyle is not studying or teaching, he likes to play guitar, read, and write.