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## the english coulee

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**the english coulee**

is called english because here  
the english majors congregate  
after dark, purifying  
what no longer serves us.  
the shattered light  
of our demolished lighthouse  
skims the water's surface  
like fireflies seeking each other  
in the june night.

descendants  
of paradise skip hopscotch  
in reverse, leaving tamagotchi  
ghosts in our wake. here, in our river  
of eden, there's no more birthday  
cake—only blown-out wishes  
and fragmented light, drifting down  
the coulee's spine; pooling together  
where we drowned the false prophet  
and baptized ourselves  
in his blood.

as september lurks  
we drink from the coulee's mouth  
an elixir of youth. we lie  
in the water's embrace  
dreaming. then, we awaken  
on the darkest day of winter,  
surrounded by the lighthouse remnants  
of our reckoning, and now,  
the coulee carries our bodies

home again—  
where crows never die,  
wishes upon ladybugs  
always come true, and  
candles on the cake  
never blow out;  
our bodies  
aflake.

***Jona L. Pedersen** grew up in Norway, but has since relocated to the US where they are pursuing English and biology at the University of North Dakota. Their work appears in Floodwall, North Dakota Quarterly, and The Allegheny Review. When they aren't studying or writing, they like to explore the outdoors, roll dice with friends, and create art. Other passions such as wildlife biology, entomology, and environmental justice also inspire their writing. Check out their other work at [www.jonalpedersen.com](http://www.jonalpedersen.com) or follow their Twitter @JonaLPedersen for updates.*