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Fall 2011

Rock Valley College

Voices is produced each fall and spring semester by students enrolled in Journalism 139 under the direction of Professor David Pink, with the help of Instructor Scott Fustin.

Submissions are accepted from current students, alumni, faculty, and staff. All submissions are assessed anonymously, and current student winners in art, fiction, photography, and poetry are awarded prizes. Acceptance, publication, and awards are based on artistic quality as perceived by the student editorial staff. The views or opinions expressed in this magazine are those held by the artists and authors.

Current and past issues of *Voices*, submission forms, instructions, and deadlines are available at rvcvoices.com.

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Award Winners

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by James Rawson

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by Zachary Miller

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Artwork



Hope

Nhung T. Son

Mixed Collage



Artwork



Bar at Night

Scott Fustin

3D Render



Untitled

Richard A. Gessert

Subtractive Charcoal



Artwork



Peacock

Susan Frampton

Acrylic on Canvas



Lucy

James Rawson

Pencil



Artwork

The Last Book Written By An Author

Aven Simmons

Ink, Edited Digitally





Photography



Face in the Crowd

Deb Dietz



Ice Storm

Amy Atkinson



Photography

Rustic Doors

Becky Blazer



I and I
Carmin Camacho



Photography

Poised

Deb Dietz



Heart of Guatemala

Ryann Heap



Photography

Say When

Seth Eckberg



The Stag's Mirror

Krystal Rose



Photography

The night is more than darkness,
And the stars are more than light.

Flowing. Flooding.
Blurring, slurring
fingers caress my neck

Golden kernels slow dance
On the slick, hot dance floor.

Poetry

High. Too high.
Over clouds of stone.

I keep lips pressed tight
against my teeth.

I talked to my grandmother on the phone the other day and
I could hear the harsh, high pitch of shock in her voice.

Only Darkness

Ronnie Thompson

The night is more than darkness,
And the stars are more than light.
Death will be less than sleep,
But stars'll shine on just as bright.

Our love is more than kindness,
Though the Act is never right
Until death serves The Purpose,
And takes away our senseless sight.

For death must end our silly trespass
Onto the world's one act play,
And though we try in vain to linger-
Time will always get her way.

So when we breathe our last,
And the world is set to rights:
Behold the night as only darkness,
And the stars as merely light.

Poetry!

Popcorn

Diane Weber

Golden kernels slow dance
On the slick, hot dance floor.
Kick up their heels,
Start to prance
As the music picks up a little more.

Pop-a-poppin,
Hop-a-hoppin,
Puffed up proud
In their new white clothes.

Arms akimbo, legs a shakin'
The group getting larger, getting loud.
Soon all the dance floor taken,
Standing room only for the crowd!

Pop-a-poppin,
Hop-a-hoppin,
Puffed up proud
In their new white clothes.

The Light

Randi Chatfield

I talked to my grandmother on the phone the other day and I could hear the harsh, high pitch of shock in her voice. “You’re taking a religions class?” Like I’m some sort of smudged-face, illiterate heathen. We’re the only two in our family who have never been baptized. “Your Great Aunt Linda is Catholic, you know. She converted as a fad.” I guess I missed

the VH1 *I Love the* [insert decade here] special where they talked about how awesome it was to be Catholic. And forget the History Channel, they were too busy rehashing Hitler. “But religion is really all about forgiveness. . . just look at you and your father.” Nothing like having your nose rubbed in an epiphany.

I should have been born a Catholic. I’m aware that it’s odd to think of anyone flocking to that religion. Nowadays Catholics flee the Church like those small, wounded animals you see on National Geographic being stalked by a savage, hungry Lioness. I guess fight or flight only leaves one option when it comes to religion.

Someone gave me a small plastic Virgin Mary once. “You like these sorts of things.” And I do, but holding it in my hand felt simultaneously sacrilegious and strangely sentimental. She stood for months on my laptop, the patron saint of failing technology, but I soon realized that machine was beyond miracles and shoved her in my pocket, my forgotten Guardian Angel.

On St. Patrick’s Day, I stood outside a bar drunkenly sucking down a cigarette when I was asked for a light. Imagine the look on his face when I mistakenly handed him the Mother of Christ.

Poetry!

Jagged Pages

Rachel Talan

I keep lips pressed tight
against my teeth.

My tongue, a cinderblock,
sits heavy, motionless
inside its tomb.

Mouth will not betray mind.
Speech will not betray soul.

But these jagged pages
slit my fingers,
and I bleed out
poems and secrets
in the shape of
my heart.

Nothin' Like Ladies in Heels

Rachel Talan

High.
Too high. Over clouds of
stone. Pretentiousness has
its price and vanity pays
in full. Spider-leg lashes
and lipstick venom spread
over pages of youth. Drowning
divas and demons in wanting,
death comes much too soon. High.
Too high. *Please let it be over soon!* A
whore in a sequin dress: disaster. Too high
to see the truth. Lace at the neck, knives at
the spine, ready to take a life. A dirty smile,
so sultry, so haunting, is dead before it dies.

Poetry!

(Hello) My Name is Jack

Jennifer Marsh



Flowing. Flooding.
Blurring, slurring
fingers caress my neck
as the only love you've ever known
drips down your bloodied lip
you
cradle me between your fingers
like an eye cradles a tear----
like a soldier cradles a gun
with the knowledge
that the closest thing to life
is death
you empty me
into the shot glass that houses your heart
and cry out to hollowness
of my bottle body
if I could speak----
if only----
but instead
your
gentle kiss of death
engulfs me
as you swallow the only fifth of pride
that's left in your poisoned soul
I'll remain here, sitting
waiting for the next time
you reach for me
because as fate would have it,
I'm the warmest thing you have to hold.

"The biggest rat in the cellar gets that way by never getting trapped, kid," said Mr. Heller as he was escorted from Hutchison Christian School of Academics.

Fiction

"Yeah, I'll be coming here as well."
"It's a good school." He said as he surveyed the school's parking lot.

He sat there, his head resting against the dirt so that his helmet tilted upwards. It would be rendered useless in the case of an aerial attack, not that a mere helmet could save him from a cannon ball.

Rats in a Cellar

Zachary Miller



“The biggest rat in the cellar gets that way by never getting trapped, kid,” said Mr. Heller as he was escorted from Hutchison Christian School of Academics. “The world’s full of rats and full of traps; we’re all vermin living in the cellar of the theoretic upper class. Be a good rat, and don’t get trapped, kid. Remember that!”

The door slammed as the former teacher continued ranting outside of the school. Paul Severson, his student teacher, stood bewildered within and gazed openmouthed at the security guards brushing past him. Their blazers reflected the school colors—blue and white—and hung loosely on the torsos of the guards like the shedding skin of an iguana. As their footsteps echoed down the hallway, Paul turned towards Mr. Heller’s classroom.

It was two forty-five, and class ended for the day in half an hour. As Paul stood awkwardly in the hallway, weighing the consequences of leaving the students alone in the room for another thirty minutes versus the insecurities he would avoid having if he simply left through the same door Mr. Heller did, he stared absently about him. The walls were lined with pictures of prominent alumni of the celebrated high school, their names and job titles etched onto granite plaques beneath their photos. Rudolph Sanders: Horoscope Writer for *The Hyacinth Review*; Ernest Glover: Leading Optometrist of the State-line Area; Luisa Manning: Pilot for Hyacinth Airlines—these were a few names that caught Paul’s attention as his mind wavered.

At two fifty Paul decided to return to the classroom. His black dress shoes snapped against the tiles uncomfortably loud, so he tried to step gently as he entered the room. Sitting silently in five rows of six, or six columns of five, were Mr. Heller’s—now Paul’s—thirty students. Sixteen were boys; fourteen were girls. Twenty were academically ambitious students; ten were lazy. Thirteen were white; ten were

black; and seven were of an Asian descent. Thirty were pretentious snobs with wealthy snobs for parents.

“Where’s Mr. Heller?” one girl asked. Her name was Dina; she was of the fourteen girls, as well as the twenty ambitious and the ten black students. Her hand hung in the air like the mast of her parent’s yacht that was baptized “The Dina Soar” upon the birth of their favorite child. Paul remembered because that was the first item her parents discussed with him during their parent-teacher conference.

“Erm,” said Paul, coughing. He straightened his black and red Windsor-knotted tie. Pondering an answer, he tucked it beneath his black vest. His tongue protruded instinctively from between his pensive lips, returning once the tie was secured and his response ready.

“He is on vacation,” said Paul, smiling at the class and nodding to assert the truth of his declaration. “Yes, he is on vacation and will not be returning soon. In the meanwhile, I will continue teaching in his place.”

“Where did he go?” asked Dylan; male, lazy, white. He sat at the back of the room, lounging in his chair as if it were a throne and the braces clinging to his teeth his surrogate crown.

“Barbados,” said Paul, lifting the heels of his feet and bobbing his body on his toes. He was used to walking like this. “Barbados with his wife for a short while. In the meanwhile, let’s continue the lesson, shall we?”

Shakily, he grabbed the lesson plan atop Mr. Heller’s desk. It was leather-bound, black, and kept closed by a black zipper that wrapped around its body three-fourths of the way, suggesting secrecy. As Paul unzipped the folder and flipped to the day’s date, he read some of the other entries that caught his eye whilst searching.

August 28th: Welcome to Hell. Introduce little devils to the terribly difficult concept of reading a book.

December 11th: All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.

February 17th: Discuss ethics. It's swear word number one in all of their homes. The rest of the entries were similarly written or blank altogether. Expletives littered the lines, emphasized by frantic underlining or doodles ofimps hovering malignantly over the letters. Paul flipped through the pages faster, rubbing the fatigue from his eyes as he did so. He reached the day's entry and read it. April 18th: Get wasted.

"Erm," said Paul, hurriedly zipping the planner and setting it briskly on the desk. He balled his hand into a fist and coughed, straightening his tie once more with his other hand. Becoming awkwardly aware of his powerless presence before the room of children, Paul cleared his throat hastily and ran his hand through his hair. He was twenty-three and prematurely balding; the thin, wispy hairs slinked around his sweaty fingers like algae in a lagoon.

"Tonight, research and write a one-page paper on the flora of coastal reefs," said Paul suddenly, staring blankly at the students. Like stoic sphinxes, they perched in their seats as if waiting patiently for the most opportune time to pounce upon him, the anxious prey.

The bell rang and the children left. Paul followed swiftly behind them, flicking off the lights and locking the classroom door. Sweating beneath his black blazer, he hustled towards the door Mr. Heller had escaped through and avoided the condescending glares of the portraits on the walls. Perched proudly in even rows, Paul was reminded of soldiers in a phalanx—the army of the theoretical upper class.

"How was school, hun?" asked Annabel. She was changing from her work clothes into sweatpants and a t-shirt, and watched Paul through a soft pair of brown eyes.

"Fine," said Paul, lying in bed. His tie, shirt and blazer were strewn across a white, wooden chair which stood ambivalently in the middle of their bedroom. White flecks of paint fell from the chair in long strips, giving way to the true, light brown wood underneath. "Heller got fired." "What?" asked Annabel, her head stuck within her scarlet polyester shirt. "What happened? Hasn't he been teaching there for years?" Paul smiled bemusedly as Annabel struggled within her shirt. Across her left breast, the name of the family restaurant she waitressed at, Mae Anne's, was stitched in black letters. Annabel was fourteen months Paul's senior and had received her master's degree in psychology from Hyacinth College.

"He's a Nazi," said Paul.

Annabel chortled within her shirt. Her tangle of brown hair peeked through the topmost hole, catching on the collar and buttons of the shirt like malignant vines. Paul stood to help.

"No, really, what happened? Mr. Heller was almost fifty, wasn't he?" Annabel's muffled voice asked. Together, she and Paul removed her shirt and tossed it onto the white, peeling chair. Her cheeks were rosy from the struggle.

"He's a Nazi," Paul repeated. "He was seen at a rally last night and the superintendent gave him the boot today. I'm not too surprised: he carried a copy of *Mein Kampf* with him everywhere."

"Wow," said Annabel, tossing herself onto their bed. "You were being trained by a Nazi. Who's teaching in his place now? Mussolini?" "I am for now," said Paul, returning to the bed. Their thick comforter, tan on the inside and brown on the other, felt cool against his bare back.

"That's exciting," said Annabel, yawning and cuddling beneath the comforter. "Good night, Paul. I love you."

"Good night," said Paul, turning his head to kiss Annabel's forehead. "Love you, too."

The clock beside their bed flashed 11:28 in neon red numbers. Paul glanced at the clock and shut his eyes, turning his head instead

towards Annabel. Breathing rhythmically, a placid tide of contented inhales and exhales, she slept soundly beside him. She was a deep sleeper and never noticed when he rose from the bed.

Paul listened to her breathing, imagining a dark ocean, scarcely alive but for the gentle calamity of waves crashing against the beach. The visualization evoked an urge to urinate and Paul rose quietly from the bed without disturbing Annabel. He entered and departed the adjacent bathroom, looking again to the bedside table upon which rested the clock. Lowering himself onto the bed, lying over the comforter, Paul closed his eyes and tried to mimic Annabel's breathing, hoping to capture the same sleep that so easily overcame Annabel.

He had been having this difficulty for the past several weeks, a syndrome which appeared quite arbitrarily and without cause. Paul was thankful for Annabel's deep sleeping behavior—he did not want her to worry needlessly about him any more than she already did. His eyes clenched shut, he pictured sheep in a meadow, leaping methodically over a fence. Their fleecy hides brushed sensuously against the wooden frame, and an image of a farmer carrying bright shears to tend his herd appeared. After trimming the sheep, the man departed, and the beasts curled into the grass around the fence to sleep.

Paul opened his eyes. The clock read 2:49. Stifling a sigh, he lifted himself softly from the bed and ambled into the dining room, walking on his toes like he was used to. His laptop sat upon the table, left there from the night before. Peering over his shoulder into the bedroom he peeled open the computer, turned it on, and opened a blank document. He titled it Haiku: Number 23.

“We dart through a maze

A block of cheese may await:

Rats in a cellar.”

Yellow Sky

Cesar Lira

--"Yeah, I'll be coming here as well." "It's a good school," he said as he surveyed the school's parking lot.

A kickball rolled in their direction. He kicked it, far and high. It soared and he followed it up into the sky.

"It's yellow! The sky's yellow!" Opening his eyes, he stopped to process this obtuse observation. It was cold. His limbs were like the tentacles of an octopus, wrapping under and around the pillows. He wished to be an octopus named Paul. He slowly takes his bearings; for a few seconds finds it hard to recall important information. Suddenly his name and location and a thousand other facts hit him as a wave hits a cliff. An amnesiac must always be this forgetful.

He remembers his sister's words, looks out at the sky and sees, without a doubt, a yellow sky; faint and pale, but unmistakable. He stares with half open eyes. He can picture himself in a shot through Lakitu's camera, the iconic red hat on him of course. Walking towards the window, he notices how strange it all really is; the sky is yellow, the clouds a faint blue, neighbors yelling next door, cars driving by. Where did I put my 64? He grabbed his point and shoot camera and started snapping away. He took some with trees in the foreground. Some with them in the background. He thought he needed a better piece of technology. He thought: Perhaps it is yellow dust that is making the sky so pretty. Recent volcanic explosion? He moved the camera to catch a bird flying. Hopefully it is the super-volcano in Yellowstone. Then this means this is the end! His pupils expanded. The pictures immediately started taking a whole new meaning, as they should.

He tried to take one of a small band of birds flying, but could tell it would be too blurry. He wished he had a DSLR. The birds sparked a memory of a mile long scarf of birds that flew over the highway one day. He made a point of remembering the never ending stretch of birds. He starts to delete that blurry picture...

Strange, something must be wrong with the white balance. He corrects it, and snaps another. Still the same results. The ISO, white balance, shutter speed, even the red-eye correction are manipulated. No change. Every picture in the camera shows the sky is blue. He goes and speaks with his family about the anomaly. They all have their comfortable clothes on, the youngest slept with school clothes. They speak about the sky and the camera and, after a few unimportant bits of conversation, (why aren't you wearing your pj's, I forgot,) figure out the sky is unmistakably yellow. An entmoot in the suburbs.

They eat a pleasant lunch. He is restless, he needs an answer. The (blues) news tells him nothing, their camera says the sky is blue. The perplexed weatherman speaks. He speaks for a computer; a machine doing millions of calculations. "Heed the rational results," once said the man, the man now trying to legitimize irrationality. Annoyed, the television is turned off, and with a nod to his dog, steps out. The dog tilts its head, sharing his confusion about the silly sky.

Walking down his lovely suburbs, he looks up. It reminds him of a night he walked down the same road and stared at the galaxies, singing an old Moby song, while his mind was in the stars. He was afraid a cop would stop him and cuff him. "The poor man was merely walking," would say his lawyer, and he would look down and sadly nod. He wished the cop was a "lovely policeman. No suspicions, no fuss, no bother," merely "the guardian of the sleeping town, period." He could not remember who had said that, but he remembers he solemnly nodded after hearing it. Or had he read it? He continues to stare at the yellow sky. An insignificant amount of time later, he will be dead.

A shorter insignificant time later, he is in his car. The car hums on, preparing for the sonata of the bumpy road. Before he can take notice of how well the gray road and yellow sky blend in the distance, he arrives at his destination as she exits the house. As she walks, he can

Fiction

picture their day together--a silent blur of faces and emotions. They will kiss, hold hands, feel love, enter parks, drink sangria, cuddle up, find a dog, be each others' pillow, bar hop, sing songs, travel to other counties. Wonder what could have been, who else could have been loved, what other memories could have been pushed into their subconscious during sleep. She takes out a brownie.

Had they but a million years they would love everyone they felt a connection to. They would spend a lifetime with each one and, in the end, their memory machines would roll up each memory into a little, uniform ball. That ball, along with the balls of others, would be put into that famous room. In the room where the women come, and have no time to think of Michelangelo. As they should not.

He had his own memories to recollect and change, plenty enough to keep a man busy for a while. One he tries to forget: the third time he read "The Dead," it all made sense. That night, Sleep played as the smiles of his friends entered his eyes; he hid his sorrow with a fake smile to match the ambiance. Smiling as he knew those violins will play at their funeral.

They ask each other if their day has been insignificantly good. Positive affirmations signal they can begin their continual courtship. They go about their day. She mentions the sky, she is so pretty against that yellow background. That damned profile of hers like an angel. He could quote Guido, or was his name Marcello? Italian allusions and the sky continue to puzzle him but he momentarily forgets to enjoy a kiss. As they drive they stare at it and wonder. Leaning forward, gazing at the heavens, she mentions she has realized, "if one stares long enough, with unfocused eyes, one can see little streaks of light zipping by." Little electrons that can fly/They never seem to collide/They move in straight lines/As if on a ride/On a hexagonal grid in the sky.

"My camera did not show the yellow." She says. They both know that this day in history will not be noted for the yellow sky. Who is to prove there ever was a yellow sky if there is no photographic proof. Our (easily manipulated) memories will be their proof, she thinks, he adds.

She lets out a sigh and mentions her future, her collegiate future that will be distant from his. Time stops for a moment, a moment that will go

unnoticed, and he remembers an instance that never happened. He is older, standing by the door of a house, snow visible outside. He has just arrived. He is speaking with someone out of eyesight. The moment ends. He does not have to wonder who that person will be. She is sitting next to him. He is sure it is her.

"So strange, the sky's so strange, is it not?" He nods. "Salutations, love!" He says. She leans over a counter and waves a heartfelt welcome to him.

"Hello! How was work? Were the roads bad today? It didn't snow that much did it?" He makes a face a hardened warrior would make when challenged by a puny child.

"No, it only snowed a little." He stops taking off his jacket, "But you know what?" at this her face tilts, "I remember, or at least vaguely remember, something about a yellow sky." He pauses, signaling for an unspoken response from her. "You know how memories are, right? I was eating off a yellow plate earlier today and suddenly! I remembered a yellow sky! And this entire day I cannot remember why I suddenly thought of a yellow sky! Was it in a painting? In a movie?" He sits down and she comes to kiss him.

"You have the worst memory ever, you know that right?"

"Perhaps. Perhaps." Quizás, quizás.

Staring into her gray eyes, he sees the faint bands of yellow in the iris. He dives through and remembers a time when he was young. He is standing, looking outside his window at the first signs of spring. He could feel his lungs being inundated with warm moisture; moisture whose only purpose was to comfort his body by removing the memory of the dry cold. He thought about his plans for the weekend. The sky is particularly beautiful this evening. He had just finished a book and was in a post-enlightened state. Tumbling through his mind was an observation the author had said (or perhaps someone else had, but he naturally attributed it to this author). He did not know nor did he care. He snaps a picture of that sky and admires the quality of the reds, blues, and violets. "Everything is, and always has been, a fading memory."

No Man's Land

Alyson McCandless

July 1, 1916.

He sat there, his head resting against the dirt so that his helmet tilted upwards. It would be rendered useless in the case of an aerial attack, not that a mere helmet could save him from a cannon ball. His hair and eyes were already coated in dust and debris, so he figured that it didn't matter whether or not more was sprinkled over him. Besides, he would rather look up at the vast blue sky instead of at the confining, misery-filled trench that surrounded him.

It was ungodly hot and his stomach hadn't known a proper meal in days. The pitiful excuse for a ration that he had eaten earlier wasn't sitting well with him; there was no wind, so the near-unbearable stench of the make-shift barrier of corpses had nowhere to go but to remain trapped in the trench. His battalion had only lost a handful of souls between the previous trench and the present one—between which there was only a half a mile—but the stench of sun-baking decay was enough that it might as well have been hundreds.

He shifted in his earthen seat, raising a hand to wipe the sweat off his brow. It had rained earlier that day, but the hope of another down-pour was as bleak and as pointless as hoping for a German cease-fire. He sighed, looking around at the other men. Some were finishing off the last of their rations, others were being awakened by their battalion leaders. The man to his left was holding a golden cross close to his mouth, mumbling a prayer for comfort; the man to the right was a friend of his, who was attempting to recover a few moments of restless sleep.

Absentmindedly, his fingers wrapped protectively around the barrel of his rifle. Sitting there, now, he contemplated the reasons as to why he had volunteered. "The Great War" the Americans were calling it, though he wondered why America was giving any input at all seeing as they had planned to remain neutral in the war. He had not held a gun in his hands until the beginning of the week, and had never harmed another soul in his twenty years of life, but was now expected to do so for his country. He felt an eerie virginity between himself and the weapon that was to help save his life, though he was thoroughly certain that nothing would calm his nerves at this point—save for the sight of the beautiful white flag on the horizon, flapping mercifully as if waving the men back home to their families. He craved the sight more than he craved a full stomach, shoes that fit or even a pair of dry socks.

Another explosion sounded above them and debris sprinkled down like Satan's fireworks. Before he was aware of the situation, every man in the trench was on his feet, rifles at the ready. He quickly got to his feet as his battalion leader marched past, making quick and precise orders to some of the men about their uniforms, stature and so forth. He received no such comment and felt that slight twang of pride and self-accomplishment, though he knew that he was simply another terrified face to his leader and would most likely become nothing more than just another dog tag to be retrieved from a field of carnage.

He suddenly felt detached from the rest

Fiction

of the world, unaware of what reality presented him as he followed his friend over to where a ladder would guide the men from one nightmare to another. He felt nothing, heard nothing but a ringing in his ears which morphed into more of a whistling sound; the men in front of him began hurrying up the ladder in a single-file line. He ascended it when it was his turn, unaware of the debris that sprinkled over him and the other men.

At the top of the ladder, the battle field—which was already garnished with decorative body parts—widened into a panoramic view of charging men being consumed by a cloud of dust, herds of barbed wire littering the ground, sparks of light flashing followed by small blasts of red.

Multiple machine guns sounded from the German side, their rat-a-tat-ing songs, along with the shouting of orders and screaming of suffering, synthesized to birth a symphony of war. It was said that once a man hears the music, it follows him forever.

A rough hand shoved at his calf, forcing him up and over the top of the trench. The moment his feet touched solid earth, a surge of adrenaline coursed through him and, with rifle clutched in his hand, he sprinted after other men in his regiment. Not a single thought passed through his brain as he ran numbly, using the sight of his comrade's uniform as a beacon to follow, obviously stumbled over the scattered remains of lost souls before him. He continued to run, even after witnessing the newly-dismembered body of his friend crumple to the ground, ceasing to move, his soul doomed forever to remain in No Man's Land.

He ran, mindless and dead to reality, through the screaming and the gunfire. Cannon balls crashed down all around him, one landing

not five feet in front of him sends him flying backwards in a blast of debris and shrapnel. He told himself that he needed to get up and continue on with what was left of his regiment, but his brain couldn't connect with his legs to move them. His mind and body weighed him down, something warm and sticky soaked into his uniform as the world faded around him. Peacefully resting his head against the ground, his helmet nowhere in sight, he gazed up at the vast blue sky. Just before closing his eyes for the last time, he could have sworn that he saw a beautiful white flag float across the sky, waving him home.

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