

Senior Division, Short Fiction

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**The Banshee on Salmonier Line (an excerpt)**

Run, run, run, you useless little rabbit, run before Father makes a stew out of you. Sprint past the hunks of rusted metal machines; the red ochre mammoths frozen to the frostbitten ground. Past bonfire pits where I played with gasoline - stenciling skulls on the ground and lighting 'em ablaze. Into the deep blue forest. The forest where you found her. You thought she was working. 'Cause Mom worked late, back when she worked. Back when she was alive. Which wasn't that long ago at all, really, but it feels like another life altogether. I've got this picture I found when we were clearing out her stuff. Long after the funeral and long after everyone stopped caring about what I was gonna do, how I was gonna survive. The picture is of her hugging me. We're down by the pond, The Still, and I'm wearing a little Mickey Mouse hat. She's got her arms around me and she's beaming a big, beautiful smile. And I'm giving her a little kiss on the cheek. And you can tell that I'm such a little mommy's boy. And it's all just cute as fuck. But when I look at that picture? I don't remember it. Like, I can't remember that day at all and I just feel so desperate to remember that moment, to feel what I must have been feeling. I thought that's what pictures were for, so you remember shit. But when I'm looking at the picture? All I feels is that I'm staring at some old black and white from a dusty history book. It's ancient and distant and hard to trust. And part of you wonders if it ever really happened at all.