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## Under the Deck

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# Under the Deck

## **Author Bio**

Brendan Raleigh is a senior English major. He is a tutor at the Writing Center and the editor of The Gettysburgian, Gettysburg College's student newspaper.

# Under the Deck

Brendan Raleigh

In my backyard there is a hill  
and on top of that hill my father  
used to grow gooseberries—  
little grape-sized, watermelon-looking,  
sour berries which grow  
in clumps on small, thin bushes.

He planned to use them  
for pies my mother said she hated  
(without having tried one),  
but he never managed to harvest them  
because, before they could ripen,  
the damned rabbits had already eaten them.

And every time the gooseberries returned,  
so did the rabbits. No amount of brick edging  
or wire fence or run-out-and-yell  
could halt their heists.

The neighborhood cats,  
my father's only allies in his holy war,  
would occasionally swoop in  
to chase off the smaller intruders.

And once, an orange tabby shot out  
and drove one of the smaller rabbits  
beneath the deck.

It must have grown a bit  
as it sat down there, chomping grass,  
because it did not leave,  
and we knew it did not leave  
because a window in our basement  
looked straight up, pointlessly,  
beneath the deck.

It was too dark to see it,  
but, whenever we sat in the basement  
to watch TV or eat dinner,  
we could hear the soft, subtle sound  
of feet padding around  
and, after a few days,  
what always sounded like a baby crying.

The window did not open  
and there may have been something we could have done  
but, if there was, we did not think of it  
or could not afford it  
or simply did not value life  
as much as we liked to think we did.

The sounds were soon replaced  
with a sharp, piercing, biting odor—  
as if someone had doused a hunk of rotten meat  
in cheap, too-sweet department store perfume.

A few years later, we pried open that old deck—  
ripped off rotting strips of Red Balau  
and found, beneath it,  
a hole into which the animal (and many others) had fallen:  
a sunken, grassless boneyard of little mammals.