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## An Earthen Levee

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## An Earthen Levee

### **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.

# An Earthen Levee

Brendan Raleigh

Arrows glance  
off a suit of plate.  
It is unpierced,  
but, beneath it,  
small, steel barbs  
scrape and tear through skin  
with every motion.  
The arrows and gashes  
go unacknowledged  
until death  
manages to seep through.

\*\*\*

A man stands at the base  
of a skyscraper.  
He pulls a cigarette from his lips,  
taking in the poison and trading it  
for a thin film  
of composure.  
He blows smoke out into the city air.

It is a cold day  
and crowded.  
A day ago,  
all that would have left his mouth  
was water vapor.

A day ago,  
the wind would have blown  
right through him.

\*\*\*

Large brown eyes,

like a young girl's,  
stare back at the leaves,  
and perhaps through them.

Little hunks of cloven keratin  
crush puddles of leaves.  
Along with the eyes,  
they are ignored, as they must be,  
and a shot is fired.

\*\*\*

A levee was constructed  
along the river  
from the dirt and sediment  
that had washed over  
for many years.

The residents nearby  
cannot tell if,  
with each wave,  
the levee is reinforced  
or eroded.

You said the white tree was a hand,  
and hands were more mouth than mouths were,  
your gesture cut short by a look  
and a whisper at the dinner table.  
I wish you had advice for me, Uncle of mine,  
but prophecy swirls in your head, disordered.  
Everything resonates in colors and voices unseen.  
Instead, spin me a memoir of a life that didn't happen;  
translate into words the things the moon showed to you.