

East Fork: A Journal of the Arts

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Editor's Choice

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Every semester, East Fork's editorial staff holds a contest where one visual art submission and one creative writing or multimedia submission are chosen as the "Editor's Choice". Each of the two submissions chosen will receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. The Issue 16 winners are below.

Editor's Choice in Visual Art Amanda Wittmer

Missing Home



Editor's Choice in Creative Writing/Multimedia Aaron Fletcher

Astraphobia

What I would fear most about the storm outside, is that it would end. Thus, leaving the storm to rage on inside of the place I know as home. The rough and grumpy clouds, harboring the tumultuous thunder and ravenous lightning, would lead us outside. My father was the first to go. He would see the rolling clouds and hear the crashing thunder before any of us, and out he would go to face the forces of nature on his own front porch. I would follow closely behind, wanting so dearly to be like my family's patriarch in every way. My mother and brother would soon follow suit, leaving the house empty, with all its residents facing the danger outside.

Lightning and then thunder. That is the only order I have come to understand. I would count between the strike and the crash, listening to the rain in the calm silence between. The rain isn't always there; But it always seems like it should be. Without it, the calm is gone and the void is left empty. The only occupants being the numbers I slowly count off to myself. Distance. That is what I am trying to find. Do I just count the seconds? Do I count and then divide by two? It doesn't matter because I will never know and it keeps changing. It gets closer and closer, leaving me hardly any room to count.

Strike... Silence... Crash... Strike... Silence... Crash... Strike. Silence. Crash. STRIKESILENCECRASH...

And all the while, the rain keeps count of the seconds in between.

Once the lightning was gone, the rain would slow to a drizzle. All that was left to the rain would be the thunder, which was now only a low rumble. And I would sit there with my father. And that's how I knew he loved me. I knew it because he was never scared through the crashing and striking, and, if he wasn't scared, I wasn't either. For, with the lightning gone, the rain only a drizzle, and the thunder reduced to a rumble, what was there to fear?

The only thing that worried father, was the wind. The wind was like the lightning, threatening to destroy all it touched. The only difference being that the wind would often follow through with its threats. My father worried because the wind threatened so much. It could blow debris into the house and cause damage to the structure he lived in. The wind could harm an unlucky animal or pet or beloved family member. Or, the wind could take something and blow it away to never be seen again.

The wind often seems to cause the storms, and, therefore, causes the battles between thunder crashes and lightning strikes. If the wind didn't cause the battle, it brought the angry cloud containing it closer and closer.

All the while, the rain is both there and not. But, the rain can also be manipulated by the wind. The wind can shove the rain to the side, making it fall forcefully in a direction it would not have chosen on its own.

The presence of wind always causes the rain to have an unnerving chill. This is what would cause Father and I to come inside. The light splashes of rain that would come onto the porch never bothered us. They were a refreshing kiss of mist, begging us to stay longer. But, the harsh wind could cause bursts of icy liquid daggers to stab into us and threaten being drenched. This is why the wind worried my father. It threatened so much, but never seemed to bring any good.

My father would often talk about taming the wind.

"A windmill", he says, "That will do it."

He follows this statement saying:

"The wind isn't here too often, and it isn't always strong when it is, but a windmill sure could help."

I guess what he means is a wind turbine. This would allow us a source of renewable power that could solve many issues, most of them monetary. But the taming of the wind always seems out of reach. Freedom is what the wind wants, even if that comes at the cost of thunder and lightning. Perhaps the wind is jealous of the rest of the storm. Maybe it knows that rain, thunder, and lightning can exist without it. Especially rain.

Rain is usually found alone. Guiding itself through the skies and onto the ground with nary a push from thunder, wind, or lightning. Rain tends to help. It provides life to plants and crops, renews dried creek beds, and cleanses dirt off the various playthings left outdoors by children.

But there is danger in too much rain. Downpours can wash out gravel drives, flood a farmer's field, or ever cause a usually well-tempered body of water to swallow bridges. Through this occurrence, I assume that the saying "all things in moderation" also applies to natural weather phenomena.

As I recall my experience with weather, I find myself in yet another storm. But, instead of submerging myself in the thunder, lightning, and wind, I find myself within the walls of my home. Even though my family is in bed rather than facing mother nature on our front porch, I still count the seconds between each brilliant flash of lightning and the subsequent crash of thunder like each number has a meaning to me. And, filling in every silent moment, the rain continues to fall calmly onto all things exposed to the now blackened sky. The rain is always there, whether you know it or not. All the while it is watching, listening, and counting. Trying to figure out when one storm will end and give way to another.

I no longer fear the end of nature's storm. I merely expect it and prepare for all that comes after. I find my center in the rain, which remains calm within the lightning, wind, and thunder. My fear is taken by the numbers that quietly form on my lips, each one dropping like the rain that falls between thunder and lightning.