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## The Vernal Pool

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Shelter

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Peer reviewed|Undergraduate

**MICHELLE M DOWNER**  
**SHELTER**



**THE VERNAL POOL**

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## Shelter

The earth shocks the sky  
as I watch the lightning from our back porch.  
Rain pools at my collarbone,  
my hair still wet from my shower.  
Mother says I'll catch a cold;  
it chases me each night into my blankets,  
its clammy embrace too weak for their warmth.  
Tonight the trees pound their chests in camaraderie,  
eager spectators of the violent electricity,  
and the cold sneaks feverish fingers  
onto my forehead as the battle above  
arrests my attention. Shivers are sent  
through my bones like the light  
to the wanting welkin. Brother defends me,  
says he will protect me from the cold  
that wraps itself beneath the threads  
with which he buries my shoulders  
just as we do in the summer in the sand.  
Waves crash through the grass, their air  
sending green skyscrapers swooning,  
shrinking in the wake of the wrangling.  
A bullet loosed in silence, the gunshot comes  
in miles counted Mississippi.  
One,  
two,  
three—  
thunder strikes and I'm out. The chase over,  
the fight only beginning, I am called to bed.  
I don't see enough bruises

beyond the clouds, my eyes desire to see  
the charged blood drip in currents, but mother says,  
*that's enough*. She tucks me in with shaking hands  
as the war outside illuminates my curtains,  
her smile whimpering as she wishes me sweet dreams.  
There is violence enough in this house.