

# The Extremist

by Nathan Stattlemeyer

I saw my future.

I was more nervous than I thought I would be. “Biologically, I guess that was a bit superfluous,” I said through heavy breaths to my wife who lay in my arms. Realizing my humor may not be appreciated, I squeezed her a little tighter in an attempt to be reassuring. Her reply was only a voiceless laugh as she snuggled softly against me, an act more comforting than she could imagine. I wondered if she could hear the irregular beating of my heart. My breathing slowed.

For a quarter of an hour I lay in silence, smiling at my thoughts. It was fifty-eight minutes past eleven when I looked at the clock. The regularity of her breathing and a few of the tiny twitches I had grown so fond of told me my love had fallen asleep. “Merry Christmas, sweetheart,” I whispered before kissing the top of her head. I abandoned myself to my drowsiness. My blissful thoughts did not hinder the onset of sleep, but rather welcomed it, ready to be set free from the constraints of consciousness. My breathing became shallow, and regular, until I was asleep.

My last breath blew a short wisp into the cold night air. I lay naked and alone on the ground with my arms wrapped rigidly around myself. Nothing moved except the slow and silent snow that sprinkled me. In my blue hand, a rough-bound canvas journal lay sparkling, filled with exclamation marks, observations and adventures written in indelible ink. Extending from my feet, dead leaves, tossed by a shuffled walk, showed dark on the snow, winding back nearly a mile through the woods to a pair of boots and several mounds of wet clothing, already stiff with ice. Beyond them, at the base of a small bank, the moon gleamed off a wriggling black hole jaggedly cut into a white plane.

I’ve been told that scenes from my life would accompany my death. God...if only.