

Excerpt from “The Gift”

He ran so fast his chest ached of exhaustion. The echo of his footsteps could be heard in the night air. Tears streamed down his cheeks. He turned his head quickly to see if they were watching. But they weren't.

His mother had tears in her eyes as she handed him some food rolled up in a paper bag. The food consisted of sandwiches, fruits, and a chocolate bar. She knew how he loved chocolate. His father turned away from him after pointing toward the door. At fourteen, the year had been a hard one, food sparse. The electricity had been turned off twice. The heat came from an old pot belly stove that sat in the middle of the living room.

Switches and blades of grass ripped at his face as he ran not knowing where he was headed. The tears stuck the blades of grass to his already reddened cheeks. He knew he shouldn't cry. He had to be a man now. But he couldn't seem to help it. He felt sick. He suddenly stopped dry heaving on the side of the road. The cold fall air started to rip through him as he looked around the darkened sky.

“The lights out here sure glow bright,” his father would say.

Warren stared out to the open sky. He thought about how he used to lay out on the grass and try and count the stars that lit up their small farm. Too many, he would always think. He would stop as soon as he realized he was counting some of them twice.