Shattered

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol24/iss1/10
Crunch, soft.
Little pockets of icy snow pop under my foot. In the dead forest, the noise blooms.
I glance upward at the sound bouncing through the shredded trees. My antlers, like branches, tangle the breeze and make it whistle softly.

Crunch, stealth.
A larger popping pocket of snow, above me, somewhere. I catch a whiff of . . . something sour. Like a dead carcass, hollowed out by little claws and excrement left to rot. But less aggressive. And more foreign.

Crunch, quick.
I swing my head to my other side, antlers weighing down my woolly neck. I glance up, through black eyes and snow-scarred lashes. A tuft of lavender peeks through the snow to caress my slender leg.

Crunch, scrape, swoop.
I see it. It has an antler of its own—straight like a frozen stem, gleaming like a frosty puddle. It raises its horn to the forest . . . to me. The wind caresses its strange fur and it is at last still.

Flash, crack.
A beam like lightning a crash like thunder a thud like pelting hailstones.

Flash, crash.
A light like springtime the ground like bedtime a black like winter’s night.