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Final Essay
Timeless Inevitability

The distinction between the past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion. – Albert Einstein

Not a sound stirs, not a drip, nor a drop. The world is silent and cold and dark. Dark, except for two nearby street lamps radiating lifeless, fluorescent light, and following their shadows sits a house. A house tucked behind bushes drooping with icicles. It's been months since lights have brightened the now barren floors and empty closets.

Phantom lights shine through the windows, a ghostly wreath decked in pinecones and red-ribbons hangs on the door. A pair of boots sit stiff by the entrance, the grey slush from the street sliding off in clumps as it slowly melts. Above them, on a wooden hook, a black coat hangs in folds. The silence hovers, dry and thin, crackling at the slightest noise. In the bedroom, thick red curtains trap the light; a red cover and matching sheets drape off the bed. A wooden carved bird stares unblinkingly from its pine-wood perch. Then... slowly, a wisp of fragile sunlight peaks through the curtains, creeping along the floor.

As the sun rises, the shadows retreat indoors. The dinging of railroad guards welcomes the new dawn, and morning after morning, the Earth warms and wakens, until gradually, almost as if an artist gently erases the snow and the cold, the first bud appears. Droplets run down the windows, collecting and melting the last of the frost off the panes. The house shakes loose curls of shrunken paint. Blossoms emerge on the yard's fringe, bursting with fragrance and color; children run by and into the house, a season's worth of dust and disease tumble into the sweet, chilled air, only to be dispersed into the wind.

A garden filled with annuals blooms; smooth, pale hands smudged with dirt carefully craft each flower's bed. The hose uncoils from its winter home to water this island of color and

mud. A green framed bike is brought out, polished, and pumped with new air. At long last the plastic blue shovel is tucked away into the unruly garage, indicating impending change.

With the explosion of heat, smells and colors, the lawns thicken, barbecue smoke hangs in layers, and the sound of children laughing and running barefoot fills the air. The house joins in. The door swings wide open welcoming in guests; windows transform to screens; friends and neighbors stroll through with lemonade; children come from the beach, spilling sand around the house, tickling the floorboards; rain from afternoon storms rolls through the gutters, splashing and spilling, flooding into the driveway. The house glows with the vivacity of life.

The hose is busy at work, with the same hands caring so tenderly for the garden, rapidly filling up water balloons and scrubbing furiously at the car to wash the soapy suds off. Afterwards, the car sits gleaming and the ground is littered in a rainbow of plastic bits, and the first leaf's edge tinges yellow, as the sun begins to set.

Tangibly; air catches fire, as do the leaves, burning bright with oranges and reds and yellows; aging until ripe for their last journey in a flurry of wind – whirling and spinning, swooning and swaying, to rain upon children giggling all the way up to school. The house fashions a fedora of maple and oak and Gingko leaves, and as the children calmly return home, the aroma of fresh baked home apple pie wafts through the rooms. Lights flicker on as orange melts to blue.

The hoses coil around their hook once again, finished with their work, and the hands trade for rakes. Raking is vigorous, the hands gathering and scrunching leaves until they're calloused and blistered. Once inside, the sound of chewing apples with caramel fill the air, and backyard bonfires die down to candles.

Until the first chill of cold snuffs out the last wisp of fire, and soon the warmth of light spills out through the frost encrusted windows. The hands are busy typing at a laptop until the moon rises over the drifts of snow, caked in glinting ice. The boy stands up and walks out the door, his breath misting in the icy air. Stars burn with celestial mystique, and beneath them, the boy stands among the snowdrifts, watching tradition become the inevitable past, and as the light fades, the boy continues to stand in the now darkened house, listening to the wind moan without a sound.