

Danny Miller

Writing Award

Matthew Vetter (Morehead State University) is the winner of the Danny Miller Writing Award in the Graduate Creative Writing Category.

The Willow by **Matthew Vetter**

We awake to find the willow
laid out on the wet grass,
where once she welcomed us
into her still green canopy.
Within hours, the landlord's
husband is out front in boots
with chainsaw, hacking it
into pieces and dragging them
to a brush pile behind the house.
You are alarmed for this
is another loss, which we
cannot control. So I tell you,
"Here is wood for our stove,
and warmth." But what
does it mean to gather wood,
to load it into a black iron
stove, to burn the tree?
I refuse to answer fire,
as I refuse to investigate
the willow's sudden collapse.
Termites, strong winds, lightning?
It is with ignorance and apathy
I confront tragedy, if only
to allow innocence, if only
to let the joy and sadness
of small decay enter me
slowly, gently. Let it bud
and blossom from my body,
saying, "Wood, Warmth, Burn."