

Jack (Year 11, Dulwich College)
DLF 2017 Winter Short Story Competition entry

A Nuclear Kind of Winter

It's January and the snowflakes waltz down from the grumbling grey-blue sky. It's cold for January but apparently this has been an unnatural few years so I guess I must put up with it. Mrs Geall says it wasn't always so rubbish. She says we did make ourselves really great again. She won't tell me what went wrong though, nobody will. That's why I'm going to visit her today, as I slip on the frozen flakes of puddles down the path, peppered with the white and green explosions of snowdrops. It's turning out to be quite a nice day after all.

My Geiger counter is calm. Blip. Blip. Calm is good. Apparently. I like the forest, it's not too high yet because Five Years Ago, a little while before my mum had me, there suddenly weren't any trees. Mrs Geall says there suddenly weren't 90% of the world's population as well, which sounds pretty bad. Imagine, Five Years Ago, someone got really angry, someone who Mrs Geall says was a lot like me. I don't think He was my age, apparently he was something really old like 71, I don't really know because I can only properly count to 8, and then 71 because that's His age. But Mrs Geall says that He acted a lot like me, all angry and having tantrums, she says He was something called impetuous, which I don't really know yet. She says not to worry and that I will know what she means when I have kids myself. I muddle on towards her cottage. My Geiger counter chirruped excitedly from its perch beside my waist.

I shuffle past all the hooked and clawed trees, whose bony twigs wave like skeletons' arms. I like to think that Five Years Ago all of this looked really nice. I think I would have liked it, the world before He got angry. But He is not a problem now because I am lost. Usually I can remember where I'm going, Mrs Geall says that's my greatest gift, but today I can't. I'm not sure why. I feel a flush of panic grip me in its talons. I'm scared. My Geiger counter is starting to get a bit angry. Angry is bad. Mrs Geall says we're all scared and not to worry but being lost is quite a worry indeed and I'm really starting to get nervous about it all now and I am panicking which I know is a very bad thing to do because when you panic you really start to get really sad and confused and that's really bad because if I get confused I'll get even more scared and-

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My Geiger counter is really mad now. But I have to just focus on Him and what He said. Apparently.