

*The Skier*  
by Dynn Javier

The numbness never really bothered David. His skin felt pale and his head weighed down heavily on his neck, but the anesthetics were doing their job. He watched a pale winter wind push the trees outside and saw the snow fall in a sharp slant along the path of the sky. The coldness of the room was one of the many things he couldn't feel, and his face more or less resembled stone. The wide window bore back a misty reflection of David sitting propped up in the bed like another, more vivacious translation of himself staring back inward from the outside. He broke from this trance momentarily and shifted his glance to the cast that sheathed the greater half of his right arm. The motion of his eyes was so sudden, and so remote from the idleness of the rest of his body, that it was as if a film of ice had just cracked under his eyelids.

Two layers of numbness protected the arm. The first of which was the anesthetics which still brought the blood in David's veins to a lulled stupor like quicksand. The second was the cast as bleached as the snow outside and threadbare of any signatures or drawings; it was fresh. From the tip of the cast he could see the pink nubs of his fingers. He didn't try to move them. The accident which brought David to this room was amateurish—he had sliced down that very black diamond several winters in a row. Of course, he had taken a few spills before and had maybe found himself in this infirmary once or twice, but his coming this time was the result of a very particular mishap. David's mind burrowed into itself and his brain flushed, a tender mixture of frustration and singular embarrassment forming behind the frost which had already seemed to congeal again at his eyes, fixed on nothing now but the cast.

Lucia skied also but had never gone on a trip with David and his friends before. Quite simply, David thought her to be pretty, and wonderful, and funny, and a good skier, too, at that, and he had been able to envision her face behind the bandana wrapped tightly over her ears and the beanie fit over her soft hair and the broad set of goggles that covered the luminescence of her eyes. David had often gone so far as to playfully tap at the glossy surface of her goggles with his index finger whenever the opportunity presented itself, much to the annoyance of Lucia. This made David's heart flutter with anxiety every time but thankfully his face was as cocooned as hers. The very same anxious zeal that burst upon David every time she spoke to him, or approached him, or every time her name appeared on his phone screen as if it were some act of digital providence, or when David noticed her standing at the bottom of the slope eager to witness his swift descent only to watch him snag a rock while clearing a ramp and fall awkwardly with all of his weight on his right arm.

David slowed down, now noticing that the anesthetics were beginning to wear off. He rolled over these thoughts of the previous day in his mind like they were skipping stones in his hand. His gaze hadn't left the cast, but he was thinking of other things. The rock in his path was an oversight that frustrated him to no end, but what was even worse was the crumbling downward. A dull soreness throbbed under the cast, but instead of considering the newly inserted metal rods David indulged himself with greater pains: the rush of his friends—and her—to his aid; the humility at being unable to help himself; the grueling trip to the infirmary on the snowcat. She sat beside him through all of these moments, and David was worried that at the time the pain had sculpted his countenance into something horrid, a possibility that hew more from his spirit than surgery on his arm ever would.

At this point, David slunk back to his original position. That is, his eyes returned to the window until his stare iced over once again, and the weight of his eyelids eventually grew too

much to bear. The clinical blue of the small room closed in and settled on him like the starched blankets that covered his legs and torso.

*hey! I just got home, how are you feeling?*

With a push from his good arm back against the resting arch of the hospital bed David lurched forward, head down, body curved in a concave position, face and eyes scanning the small tray table locked upright over his thighs. The bone plates in his spine grinded like stone wedges and the good arm now held the bed's safety rail with a white knuckle grip. He had silenced his phone earlier but the screen lit up and some of the light had refracted against the sheet of ice in front of his eyes. Now the light illuminated his entire face and he read the message again carefully. It was from Lucia. Pain tingled down from David's right elbow and trickled to his wrist and palm, but he took his good arm now and held the phone straight outward in front of his face. Then he rolled his right shoulder forward to lift the cast up to the same level. David wanted to see if he could feel any sensations in his fingers. He noticed himself breathing a little more audibly now, but tapped gently and slowly at the phone with the protruding nub of his pointer finger.

*Haha hey, I feel fine thanks wbu?*

He hit 'Send' and slowly reclined again letting each bone settle into its right place. His arm felt better than he thought it would after that ordeal, and David was pleased. He exhaled warmly and just before he was about to let his mind roam to thoughts of Lucia light poured across the tray table again.

*heh, um, I'm fine but are u sure you're alright? I was really worried about you...*

At this David could feel the muscles in his legs tighten and he, once again himself, pushed forward off the bed, his good hand leaving a small depression in the white sheets from the motions. The bed rustled and his body shifted and he compressed the starch under him like snow. The anesthetic that once weighed down on his head and concealed his arm was a distant memory now, a lingering afterthought. After all, David's own thoughts zipped down the skew of his mind and into his chest and body. He was glad she was doing well—fine—first of all, considering how the last big snowstorm of the winter was set to take hold. The characteristic 'um' threw David for a loop until he mused over the prospect of her worrying over him—caring about him. He smarted himself for being so callous and stacked his body up to reply more sensibly this time around.

*Oh, that means a lot but really I'll be ok srsly!! Don't worry about me, I'm just glad u were able to get home safe before the blizzard hit*

David was now hunched over with most of his weight resting in a forward position, legs and feet acting like a counterbalance to this concave arrangement. He rested his cast on the tray table beside the phone and noticed the rhythm of a steady throb tuning up under the white plaster, like pressure pushing out from the inside. The phone light dimmed on its own as David waited for a response; he bit his lip when the phone decided to shade itself. More thoughts were now hopping off the lift and barreling down, coursing through and pushing fast. David knew two exclamation marks was a dumb idea. Especially after 'srsly'—he was coming off like a child. And he had forgotten to ask a question to bolster the conversation. Oh, but he had waited far too long now to attach any riders to the bill. The tedium of these complaints was broken by the wind which had picked up outside the window. The storm flicked pine needles and snowflakes at the mirrored glass and the trees, too, lurched in the direction of the wind. David's senses were shedding their skins with the last of the anesthetic running its course and he blinked and sighed

over his reflection on the phone screen for a while until once again sinking back into the lumpy mounting of the bed, this time sitting with a tense stoop.

Taking his bad arm up from the tray table, David did his best to gingerly bend his hand toward himself, sculpting the cast from the inside out. His fingers felt like they were halfway between brittle twigs and hard-set steel wire but eventually he wrestled them into position, neatly tucked under his chin. After tucking his knees up from under the table, David curled his elbow—just barely free of the grip of the cast—toward his abdomen which lifted upward and coiled into itself like a warped spring. Eventually the elbow found an artful resting position at the base of the thigh, just above the kneecap over which David laid his other arm with the palm facing down, the wrist wrapping around nicely to the bend in his leg like the roots of a large tree. He remained like this, motionless, as if on display for someone, for a short while and concentrated on the looming storm outside. Frozen in his musing pose, he noted proximity of the cold tiles on the ceiling and the floor as well as the brown wooden walls, shadowy yet polished like brass. A film of ice materialized in front of his pupils. His left foot fell asleep. His breaths grew silent. More snow fell.

*haha ok sure tough guy,, and yeah the snow is so crazy rn I can't believe it.. do u know when you'll be back?*

David's entire body vaulted forward just as the light pained him awake from his bedrock. His head took a dominant position in the front as his face caught the brightness. The pillow at his left side bore a deep depression from his good arm pushing back with such force. Steady breaths came but David felt as if the winds from the outside had somehow parsed through the glass and little streaks of icy breeze darted and whirled past his face. He could feel his toes curl in the cognizant foot and let the tendons in his legs tense up under the white sheet. He finally felt the need to stand.

The skier grasped around and snatched the sling for his arm from the side table beside the bed. He kicked at the tray table and it locked back into its storage space with a rough plastic thud. Next the sheets were shed, which David shuffled off from over his legs to a messy heap across the guard rails. Finally the pillows at his side were piled up at the far end of the bed after having dug his sleeping foot outward towards the door. He swiveled sideways at the hip and his feet left the bed and were suspended in the cold air for a moment before David tactfully pushed himself off with his good hand.

Contact between his bare feet and the icy tiles made a soft pitter patter sound as David stumbled forward slightly; he fumbled on his sleeping foot and winced at the phantom pine needles that bristled and pricked at his toes and heel until the blood finally managed to flush down his leg. Catching himself a few short steps from the bed, he turned around back towards the window and bent forward from where he stood toward the rumpled sheets; the phone stood out on top. David dug his good arm into the bed like a ski pole to support his weight and suspended the cast over the phone with much quivering and shaking. He hadn't stood up since before the cast had been clasped on his arm and with no more anesthetics the fat ivory anchor under his elbow pounded in protestation. But David proceeded to tap hesitantly at the phone screen, each letter a conscious decision, a movement compounded by all his muscles and all his mental capacity. He had lifted the heel of his sleeping foot off the ground and drummed softly at the tiles with the tips of his toes, flirting with the brisk feedback from the ground.

Each successive tap of the finger sent a jolt back to David. Pain, as expected, but something else as well, a glossy lightness that effused past the rigid border of the cast and through to his entire body. The pain bothered David, of course, but entwined in the harsh

throbbing of his arm was a balmy delight that wove itself between and around every harsh pang of blood that twisted the fibers under the white casing.

*Docs said I could go home in a day or two. Looking forward to it haha*

The wind surged up with a dull roar and more pine needles and snowflakes assaulted the window with steady thuds. David straightened his back and slung the sling back over his right shoulder and shifted his weight to his left foot, shallowly bending his right leg to keep the snoozing foot aloof, skimming the tiles. He let his bad arm hang at his hip; he could feel the veins bulge but the cast smothered the flesh like a shell. David took a deep breath. He hadn't pressed 'Send' yet. Instead, his marble-like eyes lunged at the window. His chiseled scowl watched the snow and wind whirl and twist outside. The storm carved at the air. The trees—which before stood like thick, ornate columns decorated in speckled bark—now struggled to stand erect. His eyes were locked on the scene, the tempest he could feel pounding against the window. He exhaled.

*Docs said I could go home in a day or two. Looking forward to it haha. How's the snow back home?*

David paced about the room. His foot was fine now, but the arm was tingling after sending that last one; the pink nub of his index finger twitched quietly. He was restless now, the pain and cold and warmth had mined through to the core of his natural metabolism, and he made circles from the window to the bed and back. He wondered when he would be able to ski again. Definitely not too long at all. He assured himself while tensing the cast, imagining a tight fist, fingers wrapping around a ski pole, knuckles and palm flushing red under the pressure.

*it's not too bad here! just trying to stay warm and comfy, but the roads aren't closed and most places are still open for business*

And David leapt forward. He saw his chance and cleaved at the powder from under his feet. His arms hit a primal rhythm and he struck at the snow with the poles, picking up speed with each hammering push. The trees and flags gunned past him and the wind sliced at his skin exposed between his hat and his face mask. His body felt raw but every bone, every muscle, every cell in his body burned and drove forward. He skirted to the left then lunged to the right kicking up a wave of white powder behind him. The blades popped up and he glided above the ice for a fraction of a moment before hacking back into the snow, knees and hips rebounding. Faster.

*Well hey, do u think you'd wanna grab coffee when I get back?*

The sun made the snow shimmer and every passing, rushing inch nearly blinded him. David furrowed his brow behind the sheen of his goggles, but his stone countenance was now scorched and searing in its relentless motions. He leaned forward, careful not to lose his balance but encouraged by the wind whipping past his own shedding spirit. He could feel the sweat running down his body but the freezing air looped around his limbs and face and numbed his whole body. But David could still feel the heat, and the sun, and the snow fountaining off at the edges of his skis. He smiled, and his eyes gleamed. Faster and faster.

And the phone on the bed lit up again.