

# Winter

*by* Michael Gillan Maxwell

I first met death in an alley.

A cat frozen stiff and stuck fast to the icy ground on a crackling, frigid February morning. Its blank eye stared up at the Iowa sky.

I stared back.

My little brother careened down the icy slope. His sled flew over the retaining wall at the bottom of the hill and crashed into the street below. A torrent of blood spouted from the gash in his chin, soaking his snowsuit, pooling in a crimson stain in the crystalline snow.

20 winters later, he was dead.

But not from that.

