

# 2016 MCC Creative Writing Contest

## Fiction Category

**First Place:** “The Last Dance,” by Derek Hicks

A veil of mist burst forth from the bathroom and a man stepped out. He wore a blue suit and a red tie, which he adjusted and straightened. He walked through his apartment to his small living room that contained a television and a woman dressed in a sparkling red dress that matched her long hair.

“Got everything together, hon?” The man asked.

The woman nodded back, “Yes....” Her voice trembled before retaining composure, “Yes I am, Tom.”

Tom wrapped an arm around her and kissed her cheek. Her face shifted to a soft pink as they walked out of the building, paying no mind to the sharp, mechanical beeping noises coming from the television.

Outside of the apartment, the night sky was lit by orange flashes that resembled a fireworks display. However, the streets were filled with people. Men, woman and children were clashing their bottles and debris at a group of four men in body armour. Behind the men in armour, stood a large vehicle with a long barrel protruding from a rotating section in the centre of the box-like frame. This tank rolled closer to the protesters who merely let out their anguish in the form of violent screams and profanities. They began to throw whatever items they could find at the tank, to no avail.

Thomas and his wife, Linda, kept to the sidewalk. They slipped passed the protesters and the riot police and entered their cerulean car. As they placed their seat-belts on, they looked at each other and nodded. As the car rolled out of the parking lot, more orange flashes filled the skies over the city. In the bay, hulks of ships set sail onto the moonlit horizon. The air was filled with the "whomps" of distant explosions and the "ratatat" of distant gunfire. Jets zoomed passed the skyscrapers toward the horizon where white flashes ripple across the land and sea.

The couple drove through their city, not paying mind to the various groups of people setting fire to shops and homes. Occasionally, a bottle would break on the car or a man would curse at them as they drove by, but it didn't seem to phase Tom and Linda. They kept their eyes on the road and drove carefully around the crowds of rioters and military personnel. Their car crept closer, down the hill, towards a half-spherical building on the shores of the harbour. This building appeared like a pearl in the chaos of the burning city. Its lights still showed out the crystal-like windows. Outside of the building, there was a sign that simply read, "Amphitheater".

A trio of helicopters zoomed ahead, passed the amphitheatre and towards the orange coloured sky in the distance. The flashes of light were drawing nearer to the city. Suddenly flashes of light could be seen across the sea and in almost every direction.

Tom and Linda pulled into the amphitheatre parking lot and entered the building. The room was laced with white carpeting and brilliant crystal chandeliers hung from the ceiling. The back window, which face the sea, covered the back room and gave perfect clarity to the once beautiful ocean, now choked with warships.

A man dressed in a white suit bowed to Linda and Tom and offered them some crackers. Tom declined the offer, but thanked him anyway.

The room glistened with the aesthetic of high society. A tray of food was laid out on a buffet at the back of the dance hall. A woman in a stunning white dress stood upon the stage and played a soft violin tune that filled the room with a calming atmosphere. Alongside her was a pianist that added to her tune. A couple dozen couples danced across the ball while others ate food at the buffet while watching clouds of smoke rising from the countryside and from across the sea. They watched as the orange glow in the sky and the flashes on the horizon drew nearer.

Tom and Linda wasted no time and entered the dance hall. They slowly swayed with each other to the music while holding their hands tightly together. The sounds of cannon blasts mixed with the music as it accelerated. Now, the couple danced quicker together. In the sky, streaks of missiles lanced in the direction of the battleships from a V formation of fighter jets. Wall of fire clashed and washed over the battleships and the planes fell from the sky. Around the city, fire washed over the streets. A final spear of absolution streaked towards the city.

The piano slowed to a somber tune, the pounding of guns taking the place of the bass. Tom and Linda held each other close as they watched the harbour. The time had finally come. Tom wrapped his arms around Linda.

“I love you.” He said, moving a hand through her hair.

“I love you too...” She said as she moved in to kiss him

There were sudden gasps and screaming as the dance hall filled with blinding light. The world around them simply disappeared, but not each other. Linda and Tom held on, kissing, as the light phased right through them. The held each other close as the world came to an end around them and then they were no more.

## **JUDGE'S COMMENTS:**

The pacing is effective for the length of the piece. The writer commands a good use of sensory detail, and the lack of any real sense of location, time period, or specific detail of the event that is unfolding lends itself to the surreal feeling of dystopia. The main characters' bizarre sense of calm paired with the contrast between the people in the amphitheater and the people in the streets gives the suggestion of something more beneath the surface.

---

*Kyleigh Ritter is a 2009 graduate of Michigan State University, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in creative writing and was the recipient of the Jim Cash Creative Writing Award. She currently works as a professional writing consultant in the MCC Writing Center.*