Nuclear Winter:

The sky is an ashy, formidable haze, abandoned by the sun in whose place now resides a wandering gray. It freezes the atmosphere and all creatures trapped beneath it. As for the ones above, floating off in tiny capsules of hope, even they will starve eventually, if the isolation doesn’t madden them first. I haven’t felt warmth for weeks. Even under several layers, even when I’m running from the hiss of the bombs. We are forever trapped in night. As I lay on this hill I try to form constellations from the starry warheads above, but they move too fast that I can’t even do that.

I feel her hand grasped in mine and I roll over to look into her eyes. Perhaps I have felt some warmth. If I had to die, I wouldn’t want to go through it alone. Knowing that she is right there beside me helps me ease into it.

I lean onto my back. My uniform is thick and scratchy. It’s too loose in one area and too tight in another. My mask is on the ground next to me. It will be a painful death, but it was the most natural option. I let out a cough and little specks of red spill onto my chest. My name is blotted out in blood.

I look across towards the horizon where I thought I saw a sunrise. But the sun is too big and it’s moving too fast, directly towards us. Who will kill me first, nature or man? It’s a race and I’m rooting for nature. Just to be sure, I take some deep breaths and let out some fierce coughs. My throat burns all the way down to my stomach. The sun is much bigger now, almost blinding. I turn back to her.

I don’t think or wonder. I don’t fear or grieve. A dead man needn’t question for he will know soon enough. Perhaps I should’ve started earlier, for I was a dead man the moment I was born. Memories of us flash by quickly. Good ones, bad ones, ones that may have even been made up, but again, I don’t think or wonder.

The dirt beneath me is red now. Let it symbolize our love and the lives we lived. Let this little puddle of a dying man’s blood symbolize the rebel human nature amongst a gray world.

Now the sun is on top of us, casting its generous warmth across my body. I clutch her hand vigorously and lean in. “You’ve always liked the warmth, haven’t you?” She stares off into the sun.

Her legs are entirely gone. Her left arm as well has been blown off for quite a while. Little holes dot her torso and her face matches the hue of the sky. The patch of ground around her is darkly stained and crusted in crimson. When I found her I knew I could never leave. And in this way she never left me. I lay down on that hill next to her and we let our lives drift away. We would cloud gaze together and follow the arcs of the stars just like we would before the war. And even though she wasn’t there to talk to me, she still kept me company. Long ago I had died with her, and now she would die with me.

I feel my throat closing up as the air seeps inside. It becomes harder and harder to breathe. But suddenly the light of the sun is unbearable and the heat is tortuous and I know that it is man that will kill me.