

The snow fell like rain, fast and heavy, catching in splotches against the brick building. Every once in a while, the people within would hear the thump of a clump of snow, too heavy to continue clinging to the firehouse walls. They flinched at every thump like it were an encroaching footstep. Eventually, the deeper, louder thud of snow sloughing off the roof would startle them out of their routine recoiling. One of the men stood to test the light switches, jiggling it with more effort than he could afford to expend. With drooping eyelids, he sat back down in the darkness among the others, swaddled in blankets. The steady thumping continued, like a shade, punctuating every few steps with a knock at the door. But the snow packed around the firehouse, coating the building like layers of soft concrete. The thumping grew quieter until the residents could no longer hear it, and their flinches turned to shivers. The wind was slowly suffocated by the snow. Their teeth clenched too hard to chatter, and a clattering silence expanded throughout the firehouse.