

**Reagan McBryar**  
**"Untitled (Turn the Page)"**

Lightning flashes through a black blotted sky, illuminating land churned to mud by the fighting of a thousand-thousand men. You stumble, blinded by the flashing of steel, the whirl of swords and the shouting of wins and losses all around the writhing mass of people. Behind you, a horn blasts, announcing a turn in the battle that you cannot discern. Chevaliers decked in glittering armor atop giant war horses crest the overlooking hill and charge down like a living waterfall, pikes and halberds poised and ready to strike. Death abounds.

Turn the page.

A warm breeze, carrying the soft notes of a lute being plucked, brushes your cheek. Voices rise from a murmur to a cheer as other instruments join in with it: a reedy pipe, a jaunty fiddle. In the soft glow of late afternoon, a motley crowd mills about a forest clearing lit by strange floating lights, as if by magic. A young girl with wings like a dragonfly's whisks past you, followed by a boy sporting tiny antlers and a long, tufted tail. Dancers gather and begin to twirl around a small wooden stage; their clothes are made of uncountable interwoven flowers, or tiny iridescent beetle shells, or of some strange glowing fabric you have never seen. A woman with deep blue skin approaches a man with the head of a fox. He does not notice the dagger hidden in her skirt.

Turn the page.

Two men tear down the interstate in a stolen antique muscle car; you are plastered to the backseat by the sheer speed, desperately grasping for a handhold. Around you are duffle bags filled to bursting with money – one lays open, spilling its green contents to the wind of the opened windows, leaving a trail of one hundred dollar bills on the hot pavement. Neither man seems to care. The one in the passenger seat turns up the radio with a triumphant whoop, before claiming one of the driver's hands in his own. They share a brief glance, and say a thousand words without speaking.

Turn the page.

You are up to your waist in snow, and the sheer cold numbs you through almost instantly. Icy wind blasts your face and threatens to topple you completely. Through the onslaught you can just make out a figure climbing a sheer wall some 30 yards in front of you. No. Not a wall – whatever that person is climbing is alive and moving, so large you cannot make heads or tails of it from your vantage. You suddenly have a notion of how an ant feels, in its last living moments. You can barely make out the ascending figure as the wall-creature ambles like some great walking mountain, shaking the earth to her very core with each step. Just as they reach the peak, something happens – their handhold breaks. They fall.

Turn the page.

A crowd presses in on all sides, moving you physically down a wide street. Their combined chanting and crying echoes off the tall columned buildings in a cacophony that is almost musical. People of all ages, races, and genders march like a tidal wave fueled by something stronger than even they know. Next to you, a person hoists a handmade flag, letting the black fabric unfurl in the wind like a ship's topmast flag. Bold white letters shade you from the sun, declaring SILENCE = DEATH.

Turn the page.

A sudden weightlessness turns your stomach; all around you is black void, dotted with tiny specks of glittering light. You are encased in a suit made of a strangely thick fabric – you feel simultaneously comforted and claustrophobic by the weight of it. Slowly, you rotate around, almost helpless in your free-floating state. Just as slowly, something huge begins to take up your field of vision. Your breath fogs up the glass visor of your strange heavy suit, but through it you can make her out: Earth. Billions upon billions of lives, joys and sorrows and a multitude of stories untold, all calling this blue and green watercolor home. Your breath stutters, your suit makes a mechanical whirring sound in response, as you trace a line of brightly shining lights through her continents – proof of life. Proof of love.

Turn the page.