

Prairie Margins

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to the point where we decompressed and lived for a moment. We would be like a slow-controlled mechanism, which continuously released energy and required more force to turn and move. And we would not flip on command or clap our broken hands, but move gracefully over the floor, with every rise and fall we would get better. We would move as one, gliding effortlessly, providing each other with the energy we need to keep going. Swaying like a pendulum in the dining room, in a constant rhythm, liberated from being wound.

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### About the Author

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*Mariya Kutsel* studies at Westfield State University in Westfield, MA, where she is pursuing a degree in liberal arts. She works as a certified nurse assistant. She is proud to call *Prairie Margins* home to her first publication.

## Weather Vane

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Robert Overmann

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Young Vane was born in a lonely Alaskan chicken coop in the early 1500s, owned by a family of hardy Eskimo. His fellow roostmates enjoyed rooster activities, such as peck-tag and practicing their struts. Vane, however, loved to watch the Sun, and found it tremendously fascinating. Vane began to share his thoughts with the Sun, voicing even his deep fears of lonesomeness. Gradually, his loneliness began to abate as his relationship with his new friend strengthened.

After a filling grain breakfast, Vane trotted from the roost, eager to tell the Sun of his previous evening. Upon exiting the roost, Vane's stomach sank: the Sun was much lower in the sky than it usually was at this hour and much too dim. Perceiving that his friend wasn't feeling well, Vane began squawking rooster nursery rhymes in an attempt to care for his ill comrade. Though Vane was unaware of this phenomenon, Alaska's northern latitude creates imbalanced light and dark cycles—for a portion of the year, the Sun reigns supreme with little nighttime. For the other portion, sunlight hours are precious and few throughout the day.

As a young rooster, Vane hadn't yet experienced the night months. He had trouble sleeping and had lost his previously insatiable appetite for grain, now constantly concerned for his increasingly ailing friend. One morning, as he sauntered down the roost plank to take in the morning air and care for the Sun, he found a cold breeze with strange white flecks that freckled his feathers. But most importantly, the Sun was gone. Vane was heartbroken, attempting to recall anything he'd done to sicken or chase away his dear friend. He couldn't think of a single wrongdoing. Shivering uncontrollably, Vane tramped distraughtly back up the worn plank to his roost.

Panic took hold. Vane squawked in alarm to his rooster peers, but none would listen. Upon composing himself, Vane elected to ask the elder rooster. The elder rooster flashed Vane a wry smile and admonished, "Son, don't worry about it." Vane heaved his feathered breast, thick with grief. None of the others cared about his dear Sun having left, much less

made any attempt to aid Vane. After an hour or two of deliberation, he made the decisions to puff up his feathers, get out his best cock-a-doodle-doo, and muster the courage to journey from the coop. He had to find his pal in the sky. Vane shuddered as his petite rooster feet tracked through the cold, white, flaky substance blanketing the ground—he found this all extremely odd.

He pecked at the front entrance, and in his best human-speak, Vane attempted to inquire as to where his dear friend had departed. To his great surprise, Vane's owner swung at him with an ax. Vane managed to dodge and was not physically harmed, but certainly emotionally hurt. Not only had his closest and only friend left, his human had just tried to kill him. Though his feet now throbbled with icy pain and he was ravenously hungry, he elected not to return to his home roost. Instead, he proceeded to other residences in town. At best, he was downright ignored—a few neighbors were openly hostile. Vane, now about to collapse of exhaustion and hypothermia, decided to visit one final resident: Bruno, the town blacksmith.

Pecking halfheartedly at the door, Vane found himself greeted with a handful of grain and a small cloth to dry his feathers with. The blacksmith empathized with Vane, explaining that he knew how it felt to be lonely and want to surrender to life's challenges. Bruno elaborated—he understood the frustrations of others' apathy. Bruno asked what he could do to solve Vane's predicament. Vane thought for a moment, and with apprehensive excitement, explained his idea to Bruno. While Vane had no idea why the Sun was gone or why it had left, Vane knew his best alternative would be to keep a lookout for the return of his cherished friend. Here he paused, and then inquired as to whether he could be attached by the feet, with steel rings around his claws, to a wind detector atop an Eskimo barn. It was, after all, the highest perch in the land.

Bruno agreed, declaring that he would gladly help Vane, and quickly fashioned claw rings to attach Vane to the weather detector on the town barn. Vane endured the hardships of winter atop the barn, and kept a tireless vigil for his friend, the Sun. He found himself snowed upon and blown in all directions until he was nauseatingly dizzy. He endured, though, perched atop the detector at all hours of the day.

One day, the Sun did return. Vane howled his most exuberant cock-a-doodle-doo and basked in the glow of his returned friend. During his vigil, Vane had become quite a curiosity to the local residents. They had observed his dedication to friendship and were extremely impressed.

They were so impressed that they began putting Vane's likeness atop weather detectors everywhere. Today we know this remarkable device as the Weather Vane, begun by the Eskimo and one diligent rooster's commitment to his closest friend.

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### About the Author

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**Robert Overmann** studies English at Truman State University in Kirksville, MO, minoring in biology and philosophy. He is the editor-in-chief of the *Index*, the university's student-produced newspaper and the president of Truman State's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. He enjoys the outdoors, cooking, journalism, and politics.