

First Line Honorable Mention
Brett Roche

The Right Size

The face in the mirror is not mine. Its creases are deeper, darker, sharper. The brow is furrowed, an alien feature to my standard countenance. And those eyes, those now fiery eyes. Eyes now swelling with fury, thirst, and primal instincts of a cold-blooded animal. Whose face do I see, whose face, glazed with cold sweat, hot with apprehension, lies before me? My own, it can't be, it is not. But as I place a hand upon its cheek I discover, beyond all belief, it is my own.

With that behind me, my thoughts redirect themselves to my surroundings. My fists clenched tight around the porcelain sink sides of this claustrophobic bathroom. The steady, but strangely deafening huffing of my breath and heart is all the sound in my ears. And the tingle, the icy-electric tingle of unsure anticipation is all I feel.

And then, over the drumming of my heart, I suck in one more breath to release the hold upon me, the gaze my own mirrored image has seized me by. Sound pours in. In the gymnasium beyond I can hear the sounds of eager family and friends. Senses surround me. The cool air dissolves the sweat upon my brow.

This sensation overwhelms me. I begin to choke, not just from my revival of sense, but also from the anxiety of the upcoming event. Though it is not an anxiety of fear or shame, but of the expectancy upon me. It is the anxiety of the necessity to emerge victorious, not for myself, but for all others, for all who know me, for all who know of me. They are shoes I must fill, shoes that I created.

My legs become suddenly weak, my knees buckle, and if it had not been for my grip on the sink, I would have plummeted to the floor. But after this momentary

fumbling, my eyes again peer into the mirror. Again, there is that face. Yet now upon it there is something there was not before. A smile. A grin that breaks halfway into laughter. It is then that I realize the face is so surely my own, it now seems silly to have thought otherwise. I can see the unstoppable pursuit of victory, the twisted fires that fuel my passion. It is my face. It is every part of me; it is the restless ambition that will always drive me forward, that will always fill the shoes I create, no matter the size.

One more deep breath further revives me.

I blink once.

I let go of the sink, and turn right, towards the doorway, flooded with lights and cheers of ready fans, of waiting teammates. And I walk towards them, almost oblivious to the fact that the shoes on my feet are slightly more snug, slightly more filled.

Brett Roche is a freshman who lives in Halifax with his mother, father, and sister. He enjoys writing fiction in his free time and draws inspiration from authors such as Dean Koontz. His other passions include wrestling, football, and cooking.

