

Illinois Wesleyan University

From the Selected Works of Michael Theune

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Inheritance

Michael Theune, *Illinois Wesleyan University*

Inheritance

Michael Theune

My younger brother pours the last
barrel of leaves into the fire
and each of us in turn stirs the ashes
with a long metal rake,
letting the fire breathe, feed
on the autumn night air.
The fire runs hot streaks
over our calloused hands,
across our long, shadowed faces.
It won't let us leave this place
without trailing the smell of smoke.
My father moves first. He coughs,
spits blood into the fire,
and begins to speak.