

Father & Son

(Letter to Frieda Hughes)

by John Smelcer

I'm sorry to hear about what happened to your brother.
I lost my brother the same way, also in Fairbanks, less than a mile away.
Seems like we're always losing something.

I knew your dad first. I met Ted in England the year before he died.
We wrote a poem about Raven and Beowulf over pints at a pub.
Your father had heard I was from Fairbanks. He asked if I knew Nick.
I said I didn't, but promised to look him up when I got home.

I wanted you to know that Nick and I were friends until the end.
We both suffered in darkness, cast a dim light for the other.
I eventually stepped out into the sun. Nick never did.

I'm sorry it's taken me so long to write to you.
Some sorrow is too bound by guilt.



Figure 1: John Smelcer, photo taken by Nick Hughes, 2006. Reproduced with permission.