

**E**arly again. This time a nightmare did it. I was in the threshold of a grand hall. A man called my name. He was waiting in the parking lot with a hand on his member and a revolver to match. I tried to climb the bannister. Out the window. Down the fire escape. Panic struck me silent. I fell down the flight. Fell back into old patterns. Called your number. A woman answered. Enough of that. Fear is of no use while unconscious. Awake. Met the first rapid pain with open arms. Heart flutters. Sight of face. Photos taken to send. Wine bought to drink. It's not safe down this main path. The one most tread upon similar journeys. Seek out all evidence of the past. Dig a whole thirty feet wide. Deeper, still. Bury them in there. Spend all night with shovels and snowplows. Sweat a bit. Few tears. In the ground, dead love, fester, rot, grow willows next spring. Weeping ones young lovers will sit under branches with their charcuterie. Fucking like gods. As we once were. The river rages down this way. It could prove quicker. A deep flesh wound. Few stitches. Heal eventually. But, I was never convention with this heart. I take the narrow channel, I take the slow burn under the willows, shaded on the western shore. Most of me made it this way with ease, except the part of me that still cares for you. It got stuck on a rock, waving its keepsakes, letters, that photo of you gray in the sun with your shadow clipped. It fell in the water. Took forty feet of rope to pry myself off. That part of me, swimming in sorrow yet calling it drowning. Would be easier to leave this boat behind. Lower it down into the grave with the other tawdry things. That innocence would be happier there, telling the maggots stories of feigned love. It's grown heavy on this path. Weighs me down. I remind myself of why I love it. The beauty in throwing yourself a line. I'll drag it, the child of me, to a resting spot. Here it's vast. The mouth of it. Thirty feet wide. Deeper, still. And empty. Hungry. Only fed by the snows of neighboring mountains. Perhaps this is the grave. Peaceful, serene. Too great an altitude to grow anything. Inundated every spring by freshets. We reach a meadow. A large stack of hay stands in the middle. Your ghost. Left over from last year.