The Frenchtown Mill

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The paper mill shut down three years ago but it looks like it’s been decades, a grayer film and a trim of rust growing like vines along its milky steel branches. You think of the last good poem you wrote. You think of how it swallowed you. There is an intersection in the center, four miles out of town. Traffic creeps through reluctantly muffled by gravel, ceilinged by the ivory exoskeleton of the belly of the mill. The chain link fence isn’t to keep anybody out but to keep the dead silence in. Silence runs everyone out, everyone except you. The only movement in the hollow ghost is an orange bulldozer pushing a mass of rubble around an empty lot. A string of boxcars, grown over, painted with blooming roses, weighs abandoned on iron tracks. A white cross on the side of the road is garnished with a photograph and purple begonias. Your mouth fills with taproot. This has become your life.