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Adam

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ADAM

His blackness eases in the light before dawn, comfortable, as if he owned it. This is his time. Everthing has slowed into winter. Like lichens on the rock walls, their patient hunger. Choirs of light, he follows the stars all the way along the locust fence to the pasture, the white boards circling into corral. A winesap, a spy his horses might find there still: a cold, tart pressing of apple wine. *When I was born my mama held me up by the legs an' slapped me herself. This is my boy. This is Adam, 'cause he's my first born.* But December's when he senses immortality; the small voices asleep in arms of the wind. Carried from barn to sty, the shape of cow's udders; the breath of pigs cloud up, snouting beneath his fingers — till he thinks of himself as hands, hands floating above the bones of the landscape, the lives stretched out before him like candles he has lit. Groundsel, chicory, pokeweed and teasel bend to him, stubborn but immanent. A fistful of foxtail he takes, easing the calyx: the seeds sparrow the air. *Ol' times my father sang 'someday, I'm goin' to see that dry well come table'.* But it's the land itself that makes him rich. Twenty acres, Pennsylvania, the whole earth. If he plants wheat he'll have bread and whiskey, if he stocks sheep he'll be warm and contained. *When I hear the Angelus four miles away, I hear snow. The air so thin somethin' got to fall.* He listens to his daughters, fat like black diamonds in their beds, lazy to light. Breakfast is pulling him back. His wife's wide eyes. The land steeps with clouds, grackles and red-wings, all the creatures he can remember and named soft in the ground, the air wincing with roots. He watches the sun come up. In one breath, he thanks God; in the next, himself.