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Everyone Loves Spook McConnell

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EVERYONE LOVES SPOOK MCCONNELL

Leaned against weather, the earth long and slow. Think fields of dark sky. Think only to rise. The riverbed streets. Hands everywhere reaching, the texture of bread. It didn't take long to know something was off. He couldn't learn like the others, would wail without reason and tear off his clothes. Instead of high school he stayed home with his mother, helped daddy work the land when he could. *Got good hands and a bad head.* Born in the wrong body. His days in the woods. Spilled downhill, the liquid sun, the tidal flooding of deep grass. Now in his fifties, still living with mom, he's become a kind of mascot, never missing a game. He walks around town with a neon fanny pack full of found change, overpaying children at lemonade stands, petting the strays and giving them names. Think crush with eyes shut, a strange-boned hope. He would come to the library to visit Isabella working the desk. *Why you so sad?* he would ask. So he brought her a lump whittled out of a log. He called it a boat. *I'm sorry, Spook,* she said, *I can't take that.* So he came back again, having whittled the boat down to a canoe. *I'm sorry, Spook. You should keep it, sweetheart.* No one realized the sky was already underwater. That the trees will wash together, full of birds like a netting overhead. In all directions swelling, thunders in the deep breath. A ghost in his fist, Spook came back with a bag full of shavings and tossed them in the air: *It is raining, Isabella. You should grab your umbrella.*