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Cows

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GABRIELLE GRACE HOGAN

COWS

The cows are always more beautiful in person.
Lit by the pink-orange sun leant into decadence,

a sky's brushstrokes gently jackknifed,
the sunfall clouds knocking together like knees.

I long to touch Texas where its shirt rides up.
As though of languid gouache the cows settle the landscape

against their silhouettes. Their fluttered long-lashed,
their patched faces, the dead way they don't watch

the cars amble by: I admire them. I drove all night to get to them.
How many songs have we left? I play Céline with enough softness

to not trouble these beasts who bimble into the lunar lacuna
of their farmsteads. A calf is lit by the yellowed moon; tonight

how many mouths are grazing? How many calves born
with stumbling legs & two heads to carry?

(How does a two-headed calf sleep—which face presses to the straw,
which dribbles milk down its chin as it peers endlessly up?)

The songs go in circles, the pasture positions itself
as the horizon's great green ocean. I am missing

you. Your voice on the telephone becomes a cow
rustling sleep from the yellow-lit town

while these Texas backroads swell & thin & swell again.
Are there twice as many stars in Brooklyn as here?

I long to touch Texas where its shirt rides up
& with stutter the Midwest becomes a bottle rolled by

wind, that brown glass's flat echo, that flat wind
through which the old song passes. It's here, right here,

where I start asking myself to quiet down.
Why are you gone? I don't know

whether this was a loss of love or a loss of self that love,
for all its effort, could not fill.