

Into the Burn

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This is just some work that I did to work on my description, again it's a work in progress.

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So there was this one time that I remember. It was at the end of the growing season, all the hay on my Grandpa's land had been cut, baled and was put up for the winter. The air was wet and heavy, as it always is at the end of summer, and the earth stilled smelled of the day's rain. The sun had gone down, and the only light to be found for a mile in either direction was coming from the brick house by the trees that we all lived in. For some reason, at the end of the season, everyone gathers up what was left behind and burns their fields, like some sort of sacrifice for the next year to be a good one. Until this year in particular, I had always been asleep at this time, or at least catching the end of a rerun of Scooby Doo before sleeping.

This year, however, I was old enough to help with the work, running water out to my grandparents and older cousins out in the field, sometimes getting to ride up there with them, on these huge dinosaur machines with black-oil, complex and exposed guts. I loved their loud noises and how hard they looked to operate, my Grandpa up there, sweating under a straw cow-boy hat, controls on one hand and a Coors in the other. I would sit out there in the field, thinking about the world and about a lady-bug I saw on a dry stick the other day, and just watching my whole family work out there, wishing I could help more, just sitting there and feeling little.

But this year was different, the sun had gone down and the day's work wasn't over yet. I was outside, in a T-shirt and jeans, listening to all the little bugs and the frogs down by the pond, back when there were frogs, before the pond was filled with sand from down the road, the land with the red dirt and little white rocks. I stood out there, waiting and hearing coyotes and thinking about all of his stories I knew, that were handed down, my grandma telling them to me when the mood hit her, or when the light seemed just about right. I looked up at the sky then, seeing the stars that seemed to be just a couple feet above my head one second and then taller than anything the next. Just remembering old coyote and how he got himself in trouble, opening the bag and all, giving us all these stars. A shadow down on the other side of the barn worked, moved back and forth against the dim light given by the moon, that big silvery eye looking down at us, all the way down from the river, back into the woods to where the old house is. The shadow that in the daytime doubled as my grandfather kept dipping and rising, forming the leftover hay into lines to be burned.

I heard the screen door slam, and heard my grandma's voice call from the yellow-lit kitchen as my brother joined us outside. He was already a head taller than me at the time, even though he was younger, and his sandy brown skin and hair always reminded me of the summers here, and how the earth felt beneath your feet, he was my earth brother. Especially in the summer when the constant sun would bleach out his hair until it looked almost as blonde as our little sister's, and when he laughed you could practically feel the fourth of July. That's just the way he was though, always laughing about something, always planning and scheming. We were wild, feral almost, always running off into the woods, down to the river bed to look for snakes or explore something. In the early summer you had blackberries to find, and no matter how scratched up we got, it was worth it just to fill a plastic bowl half-full. We would play pranks on our sisters, I called him my partner in crime, we were always stealing dolls and dress-up clothes until my grandma would run us out of the house and tell us not to come back

until the sun came down.