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WHAT WE KEEP

Sean Thomas Dougherty

Gray-blue rain far from your fingers tap tapping the letters of your name. In the blue hills above the graveyard we found at the edge of the woods, the fireflies we chased through the trees, drinking rum—were we singing or laughing when we fell soaked into the shadows of the grass? The chair in the corner of the bar in Budapest, Pittsburgh, Kalamazoo—in the old cities in the old places where we leaned against the wall, in the smoky haze of bar smoke and breath, in the rooms at the top of the twisting stairs where we slept and fucked in the lullaby of the radiator's hiss. What we keep is small change in a child's palm. What we keep is our tongues clucked in our cheeks. I sip glasses of harsh gold, mash my teeth, my hand reaching for that dress you wore, like a factory girl on a Friday after she's quit on the last day of summer. What keeps us from worms is this tough, rough-handed kiss. To swing against slag, the purple hills of mid-autumn outside the city of bridges and blue sun, the distant tintinnabulation of church bells, blur of twilight, candles lit by widows in the windows of old farm houses. Falling into the full grapevines along the lake, the fields our hands furrowed. In the cluttered cupboards where we keep what comes. Someone turns out the kitchen light, walks through the rooms we once rented, walks away from the unraveling rain. The dime-thin dust on the windowsills where with fingers we traced our names.