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Watch

Gordon Grice

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Watch

by Gordon Grice

This is the time of night when winds course from hill and rain-cut ravine in voices, when the fat red-diamond rattler under the porch moves out in suggestions toward the corn, his neck bubbled out in brick-red scab. I build my private and sleepless stories on his wound: the arc of a scythe, the scored face of the man holding it, his color modified by the starlight in which I myself sit imagining. Or no human presence at all: a bird of prey whose browns crackle with gold and obsidian in the full sun, dying of venom, his talons scratching out a minor revenge. I have read of them, rattlesnake and eagle, finishing each other at the height of human vision before they fall.

This is the time for nostalgia, just before the wind stills, before the tentative doves spread their rumors of dawn. Silhouettes of possum and rat by the ditch, the smell of cooling cement, the walk of wolf spider and centipede. This is the hour I steal from sleep without guilt, the one I never pay back.

