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Like A House Vowing To Say Its Good Nights

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LIKE A HOUSE VOWING TO SAY ITS GOOD NIGHTS

After I take hold of his wrist, I lift his hand, and I put it against my cheek, at an angle between us. Across the alley, answering machines are playing to their absent audience. Coffee stains on the wall and the lamp turned off on the three-legged table. The hand is a parenthesis, a private thing. It holds in what it knows. There is no way to tell about it. Lying here, we are absorbed in a story written before we were born in which, right up until the end, the hero is one step behind the petal-tips of a woman he's forever trying to catch. On TV Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse glide by. We watch how they circle without touching, lean away and toward each other. How they meet just once at the center, and she bends over the arm he offers. A gesture like that—trying to bring things to rest. They stand unmoving, waiting for something, like a house vowing to say its good nights only when the lights click off and the pines at the edge of the yard at last come into view.