

# A Ghost in the Night

Maggie Watson

On the porch, the girl wades in the moonlight, sprawled across the summer-rot wood. Her fingers trace the splintered cedar as she breathes in the air—heavy with pine and honey and the whisper of water not too far away. She stretches and her rusty blonde hair flutters in the wind like forgotten streamers the morning after a party. Her stomach grumbles beneath the croak of toads and the thread of guitar strings unraveling into the thickening dusk.

Inside, the boy sinks into the couch, the leather worn and creased like old skin. The honeyed lamplight softly kisses his freckles that scatter like dust across his face. He plucks at his Gibson, humming beside the cicada shrill. The cabin sways, wind-struck, singing back.

On the stove sits a half-eaten apricot pie, its warmth still lost in the air. The counter is a sea of brown envelopes addressed to no one—adorned with crooked bows. The kitchen light flickers over the mess, spilling restless pools of yellow across the room.

On the windowsill a candle burns and cinnamon crackles through the air. The flame twists across the dusted glass, glinting between the boy and the girl, the living room and the porch—a silent message, fragile and fleeting, vanishing into the night.

The boy tiptoes towards the window, socks buzzing with bright static. Sighing softly, he finds nothing but a dusted-over deck. Silence pushes against his ribs, thick and hollow.

The girl presses her forehead to the glass, hands trembling against the doorknob. She is nothing but breath on the window—a ghost in the wood, aching for a place to call home.

But the boy returns to his guitar, his sagging couch, and strums unrequited melodies into the dark, dark night.