

Huntingburg: Summer, 2007  
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I'm talking about the embers of summer in the shadows of the country, back when you could jump onto the gravel mountain in your backyard and scream king of the world, when no one but the cows saw how wrong you were. Those late August afternoons that slipped by like syrup—skin still sun-kissed, kids still laughing in their bus rows because school hadn't yet sunk into their bones.

It was in the depths of that season that my father would pile planks of wood into the pit, breathing deeply as the heavy heat splintered into sweetcoolsummerrelief. The wood would crack and splinter along with it. We'd sit and watch as he tamed the flames, fire tongues lapping the air and softening into ghosts of smoke, turning from roaring beast to pup licking marshmallows golden brown. Over the hill and down the road, the neighbor kids would call out a chorus of one two that lingered in the fading light four five as we switched on our flashlights eight nine fireflies kissing our skin goodnight nine ten Ghosts in the Moonlight.

Sometimes, on those golden fire nights, a cousin would traipse through the corn fields and turn to us gleaming, the coyotes cackling in the dark shadow of the woods behind him. Them's witches afoot, he'd say. Biding their time. Waiting for the fire to die so they can tip-tip-tiptoe into children's rooms and tear their worlds apart. But in the ember glow, against the cow's lowing and the cricket's croaking and our parent's humming, his voice sounded like honey. Sinking into our skin with an inky headiness that had us closing our eyes to the diamond sky, dreams calling out for witchcraft, for firelight, for moments that slipped through your fingers like ghosts in the moonlight.