

Heather Cox

## Relics

A single dried up river runs through town, carving a scar, the oldest kind. Some nights, vagrants sleep in vacant creek beds, pebbles for pillows, the night a hole-punched blanket, the hunchbacked trees their only roof. Some nights, townsfolk do everything but sleep. Some boys go home empty-handed, blue-balled on the brink of blindness, but they'll survive. Soon enough they will be bearded and oil-slicked, chewing tobacco, rings rubbed pale into their jean pockets. Soon, they'll be the spitting image of their fathers, who have grown them up like cornstalk, shadowing the fields. They'll be too tall to take no for an answer. Anything they touch they'll shuck to bone.

