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Night Passage

Mornings, I used to see in the bent grass
the shape of a bed, where one deer nestled down

at night. For a year I lived beside only an absence,
the ghostly depression of animal sleep.

Spring and his antlers lost tufts of fur, while my teeth
tried to grow in straight, wet monuments to precision.

After the error of alkaline blood, I kept myself
behind locked doors and learned to mummify my body

with blankets, preparing for the salt diet.
Later still, I saw the bed of the buck thinning, witchgrass

finally rising after so many months of tamping down—
his disappearance as unexplained as his arrival,

while my own presence became more silhouette
than solid. Between him and me, a sightless

understanding that existence could be willed
away at a whim, by rain or high wind.