

Gen Del Raye

# Homecoming

Look around you, I tell him. All gone, all gone. Wheel-barrowed, bucket-brigaded, tractor-trailerred away. Bent backs, rounded footprints, all gone, all gone. The straw on the roof of the houses. The iron door on the fire under the bathtub. The warmth, earth-scented, drifting out of the outhouse. The stinkbugs, spike-footed, climbing your jacket, now dead. The loquats atop the shed, growing wild, now fallen. The gravestones under the elms, tilted over, now broken. The grate over the coals in the floor of the living room and the cloth that lay over it so you could warm your toes against it. The mist rising up all day from the pot on the stove, and the oil, like memories, seeping into the ceiling. Gone, I tell him. Gone, all gone.

No, he says. He points into the pit. Look around, he says. He hands me a shovel.