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WATCH TOWN

by **Amanda Lockhart**

I spent a week in Watch Town. I arrived and I saw that everyone exhibited pocket watches, and the whole antiquated town clung to the metal like their newborn child. In coat pockets, carried everywhere, like an extension of their rib cages. The incessant ticking drove me to the underside of my bed that night and I picked out all the threads in my sheets. I watched another restless body lay awake in the corridor until the sun materialized and made him tired. The townies looked like humans today. I gazed in the pond that I didn't notice yesterday and saw that all the fish had died. I never even saw them living. I picked one up and probed its rotted gills. I peeled away its scales until the blood filled the beds of my finger nails and I felt a hand. It was still ticking. I looked back in the pond and witnessed a deceased trout vomiting up another mangled, golden relic. I ached as I approached the banks where an old man tore the chain from his watch and broke it link by link, swallowing each link as he went. I ran to a window where a woman was drowning hers in the bathroom sink. I turned to witness the corridor insomniac dragging his like an empty leash to the flag pole where he hung it at half-mast. Last night was longer than I thought; the watches had become obscenities, and I longed for one.