

# Hard Times

*by* Ulrica Hume

None of this is real, he says, and the path slopes down to a house that is possibly haunted. One always looks in such windows, one cannot not look at the predictable detritus of another's failure, a queer satisfaction, a fairy's dust. But no, not real, none of it. And the trailing wolves, soft in quicksand, are but a preternatural threat because they are also illusion, the great book says. (The great book itself being also not real.) This is my instruction. We turn, or are turned by it, this clockwork world. No keys on the table. No table. Just these blue-eyed wolves, tame pets that someone let out, forgot to call back. The way doesn't matter now because in hard times all ways are hard. Rip of parchment blue, a simple pleasure, this. In amber all dreams stop.

