

Sam in Fragments

by stephen hastings-king

1.

The ritual built on itself. It developed codes and requirements that told him what to do: dismember and arrange in a square; let the blood; burn. The codes told him what to do and he flowed with them. He became momentum. The space he moved through was self-enclosed: the world was another place. When morning came he was distant. When the morning came he was alone.

That morning momentum dissipated but he was where he had been before. And she was still alive.

He had violated the rules.

They were outside the frame.

Sam was at a loss.

The outside world leaked in. He might have been seen. He might have been heard.

There was concealment by momentum and concealment by strategy.

The two had been the same.

Sam was at a loss.

2.

They had to leave.

There was activity in the street. She had to look like she was ill. He was taking her to the hospital.

He injected her with a sedative to keep her still. He went out to fetch his truck.

He untied her and she fell. He covered her with an overcoat to conceal her wounds and obscure her state. He carried her outside. Then they were driving through places he had never been.

3.

He looked at her slumped against the passenger door.
He said: Where did the love I feel for you come from?
He could not say.
He did not know.

4.

She was with him. He injected her with a sedative to keep her still. He piled her into his truck. They drove until a direction coalesced. They followed it to a hotel like any other.

He injected her with a sedative to keep her still. He projected himself into her narcotic dream, a small bar with tango playing from a jukebox. They were dancing.

He watched her breathing shallow quiet

Her red hair. He arranged it on a pillow in the bed next to his.

From outside she looked to be sleeping.

He said: She will love me the way I love her. In a small town far from here, we will become ordinary and invisible.

5.

He told her that he would remove the restraints that they should talk and make plans.

But she said such awful things.

He told her that they must burn off their old selves.

And she began to scream.

Later, he said: I would have cleaned your wounds.

6.

She did not love him.

He injected her with sedative to keep her still. He watched her breathing slow down and down.

Her narcotic dream was a house. The lights were flickering out.

One.

Another.

Another.

He lay on the bed and looked through a window. He waited for a sign to come flashing out of the clouds. But the gods must have been elsewhere.

7.

She was very still.

The transition from subject to object is imperceptible. It hides in the ordinary. Even here.

She did not love him.

8.

He was neither living nor dead.

He knew nothing.
He looked into a silence.

9.

He put a bag of shot on the accelerator, shifted into drive and a problem vanished.

The quarry bottom was littered with trucks and cars. Each was an exploit: a car theft, an insurance fraud. Every local who swims there knows the stories. Every local who swims there feels complicit.

What kind of attention do you pay to stories passed down on summer days? When you look through the water at the vehicles below, would you notice one more?

Perhaps.

But what was in the truck?

There are so many quarries

10.

He bought another car with cash.

He traveled between the lines and matrices of surveillance satellites, the sine waves thrown off by the tires and the blur of one self into another.

That morning momentum dissipated.
She did not love him.

He drove through the pooling voices of radio talk shows, of rituals and codes and requirements. The compartments separating parts of him had come undone. Information spilled from place to place.

A direction coalesced and dissipated again.
The space between the lines filled with fragments of different
pasts.
He was porous.

He was heading back to New York City.
There was nowhere else to go.

