

Black & White/ Color

by Robert Vaughan

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Black & White: I got stuck in a cul-de-sac. The first thing I lost was my glasses, so everything was a smudge, blurred together like rotten trash. In the first house on the circle, a woman was playing Chopin. Her left hand crossed over her right during the allegro section, and she nodded with her head to sit down. But I chose her kitchen hoping to find some butterscotcheroos or Chex Mix, or a ripe avocado at the very least. Came up empty. The next house was topsy turvy: too messy; the third I skipped because if you can't leave your lights on for wayfarers, then you deserve to be ignored. The fourth house had a nice built in pool around back, so I took a quick dip, swam a few laps before I'd realized I'd swum under the foundation and was in a dungeon. I fled up the stairs but the door was locked. It took me forever to get out of that place with my bare hands.

The last house was the size of a _____. I avoided it at all costs and looked for an exit.

Color: the cornfield is mowed down to nubs and stretches in all directions as far as I can see. I'm heading toward the stairway. Now, after beginning to climb, each step feels like a skyscraper. And it doesn't help that they're circular. So, I'm turning around, like my dog Paprika might, before settling in with her fleas. Mom says they're bad feng shui: circular stairs. We had them on our bunk beds in the trailer, before Becky fell and broke her neck. This was way before Mom electrocuted herself with hot rollers in the bathtub. I can barely see the trap door through the clouds. The stratosphere haunts me, it's hot, the endless clouds utter rain. I'd worn my black coat, Dad's last suggestion before I left, thrusting it into my hands. "You'll need this to find your mother." I didn't have the heart to tell him she'd been gone for years. And I feel guilty leaving him, like I

might if his jacket stays on the stairs. Not a clue where I'm going.
Just hope to see you when I get there.

