Geographies of Decay

by stephen hastings-king

That morning arrived with the sound of steel pipe hitting the ground again and again. Each strike at once swallowed itself and fractured into geographies of decay that gave way differentially to aspects of the day. Some opened up as persistent cold and ice and stillness; others as momentary images of people I did not know walking through a city I had never seen. As their city disappeared they moved over the marsh in the direction of the river above which was suspended a long limp yellow line between a series of green pillars; the line continued past it's endpoint toward the gap in the horizon through which a column of phantom tanks was arriving. These projections were soon followed by others, agents of the night committee who came in long black cars to gather names and spread rumors of harsh interrogations. The air of pallid normalcy they imposed had soon absorbed the tanks. For days thereafter, flecks of camouflage washed up on the beaches. Newspaper articles provided no explanations.

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