

Lockdown

by stephen hastings-king

1. After another spiral of argument he left. On the way, he locked her in the house. As he pulls out of the driveway, she is rummaging through stacks of thick linens for the bottle of Ketel One that she had stashed in the closet.

Soon she is calmer and a little woozy and walks through the expanse of second-story hallway past the giant art deco ferns and mirrors, calling people one after the other and slurring into voicemails because no-one seems to be home:

That son of a bitch locked me in the house again. Come over and knock in a window. One of them by the roses; he won't see. Be a dear. Call me.

Outside there is a swimming pool but she cannot get to it.

2. That way she tells him: I surprised a thief trying to enter from behind the rose bushes. He was halfway into the kitchen when Ma and Pa Ketel and I arrived. He was wearing a black and white striped sweater, a beret and a black mask. I was going to call the police but I didn't think I would be able to identify him in a police line-up and would not want to be complicit in the tragic undoing of an innocent. I climbed through the window to make sure he was gone.

And he congratulates her and tells her to be more mindful of her safety when she surprises a thief and says we should move the roses away from the house or hire guards and then he complains about the neighborhood going to hell because of the proliferation of imaginary meth labs run by the children of the Mexicans on staff.

3. If this goddamn plunger would just stick to the glass I can pull it inside when I cut it. I've seen this work in movies.

Over and over she hits the window with the plunger. As she grows angrier, more hair falls from its bun.

4. She enters the pool house. She considers changing into swimwear but it's freezing outside. She flips on the lights by the pool. A few leaves float on the surface of the water. I shall tell the pool boy about this tomorrow.

She imagines the conversation with the pool boy: he pushes her back against a wall and she says "No, no" weakly while wrapping a leg around him.

5. Across the yard is a garage filled with cars.

6. The water is heating. Soon it will be like amniotic fluid. She will float amongst the leaves, her nightgown billowing in slow-motion, and look into a cone made from stars.

