

AFTER

by Steven Wingate

FADE IN:

INTERIOR — SUNLIT BEDROOM — DAY — NO SOUND

Two lovers — their genders / faces / social identities / etc. up to the viewer's imagination (though I caution you, dear reader, not to imagine yourself in this role due to the psychic intensity of the following passages) — writhe against each other as climax approaches and gasp like fish in air.

But you can't hear them, no matter how many times you play the scene, because there's no sound. So feel free to fill in the empty space with your own voice, and the with voice of your real or imagined lover. Though again — dear reader — I caution you against such needless personal identification with literature, which can only lead you astray.

Once the climax rumbles through their bodies and disperses, its energy becoming one with the light, the lovers collapse against each other and we at least hear something: fevered breathing / hands touching skin / involuntary grunts signifying a moment of connection to the origin.

Lover #1 rolls away to receive the blessing of air on moist skin. Wind rolls through the window, rustling the hair of a Japanese doll on the sill.

LOVER #1

After —

The lover's mouth moves with words of deepest love / of gratitude for sexual satisfaction / of comparisons between this sexual experience and others / perhaps with lover #2 and perhaps with some un-named other.

But we cannot hear these words because the sound has cut out again, and we are left with nothing but the flapping jaws of Lover #1.

Lover #1, whose sincerity we increasingly doubt the longer we see those lips move. The longer Lover #2 goes without responding / without nodding / without offering a peep of resistance / against the onslaught of lies / that pollute both of their lives / that pollute your own life as you watch this travesty of love.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. WHEREVER YOU ARE NOW / WHEREVER YOU HAPPEN TO BE AS YOU TRY TO ESCAPE THE PRISON OF THE SELF

You, as you dither away this life with your mouth laughing, your eyes rolling.

You, as you regret your fantasy of writhing on that bed Lover #1 or Lover #2.

You, as you carry the shame to your grave / or at least until you forget that shame / or see some other person on the street you could more easily love / or perhaps take that lover home, emulating what you have seen / on this silent screen.

FADE OUT

THE END

