

Behind a Cigarette  
by Jeremy Damato

Bad news brought the rain. It came down on the city and flooded the streets. Julian turned his head back to the rustic table in the small coffee shop. She was not there. Still it seemed to him the expression on her face must have meant something, as if to say there's no use in wondering why if you already know. He never learned what he knew until it was too late, of his shortcomings or her ambiguousness.

Outside, rain trickled down the windowpane and reflected onto the chair where Leslie had sat. She was behind a cigarette when he last saw her. The blue, white plumes drifting and swaying before her eyes, a shadowy line climbing through the air. She wore a midnight blue sweater. The sleeves slumped over her hands while she stirred her coffee. Julian remembered the foam and froth that swirled on the surface, how it strangely reminded him of creation. Her hair was light brown or dark auburn he wasn't sure which? He began to doubt what memory told him.

Julian tried to heal – to understand but trying only pushed the loss deeper. All he knew was that it happened. Leslie had fell out of her high-rise apartment window. There was no question, no answer, just vagueness. How can one say exactly what happened? “It couldn't have been suicide?” he implored.

END