

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/4

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The Vanishing Rabbit

HE RAN ON THE TRACK IN THE GYM AFTER WORK. Two other men ran beside him. Strangers, stronger, faster. He ran to make his muscles burst forth from his legs. He ran until they almost did. Then he went to the supermarket because she'd called him and said some drunk was harassing her, and he knocked the drunk to the ground. The police didn't get involved. They went home and sat on the couch and watched something on TV. He told her he loved her and she told him she loved him. He fucked her and she fell asleep on the other side of the bed.

He ran on the track in the gym after work the next day. He shadow boxed during mile five. He accidentally grunted too loud a couple times and other people at the gym turned their heads to look at him. Then he went home and she was talking to the cell phone provider. They wouldn't replace her phone for free. She asked him to talk to them and he boisterously explained they had been loyal customers for years, and the company relented. She told him she loved him and he told her he loved her. He fucked her and she fell asleep in his arms.

The next day he went to the gym and the track was blocked off for maintenance. He called her and asked if she knew of any other tracks. She said he should rest, take a day off. He said no. He looked on his phone and found a track behind the middle school.

He went to the track behind the middle school. It was on the other side of town, where the streets didn't rumble and the air wasn't heavy as a truck. By the time he got there the sun had set and the moon had risen. There were no gym speakers pumping in music, just crickets and owls and leaves in the wind.

He ran with his hackles up. He thought he saw rustling in the bushes, thought he heard the snap of a big branch. He was alone. The track was surrounded by trees thrusting into the sky.

No one ran next to him, but he ran all the harder. Every rustling he thought he heard, he ran from it, pumping, sweating, grunting. This was his time, fight through the fear, fight through the pain, fight til it rains then fight through the rain. Fight to keep your body right so your mind is right so your money stays right so the people you love don't take flight in the night. Force the muscles out of your skin, force the anger out through your shins, make sure your dick can get hard when she's in the mood to be shown you're a man again.

He heard a pitter patter and a squeal. He stopped at the starting line like someone dropped an anvil on him. He looked to the right, off the track, at the edge of the trees. He saw a little movement, frantic, panicked. He didn't feel fear. He jogged over to the movement and saw a little rabbit stuck in between the trunk of a large bush and larger fallen branch, throwing its legs about furiously and squealing.

His heart slowed and his lungs filled. As he gently knelt next to the rabbit, it got less frantic. Its kicking slowed, and its squealing ceased. He spoke. "Okay, little guy." He lifted the large branch with a finger. The

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rabbit shook its fur and skipped out of the bush onto the grass. It calmly shook the bend and the current out of its leg. It looked him in the eye and he smiled. His gums felt cool in the night air. The rabbit turned toward him. He reached out a hand.

He felt a tickle on his fingertips, then his phone rang in its plastic holder strapped to his bicep. He abruptly stood and answered it. She asked him when he was coming home. He sternly said twenty minutes. She asked if he was okay.

He couldn't remember why he ran. "Yeah," he answered.

"Are you coming home?" she asked.

He couldn't remember why he went home. "Yeah," he answered. "Yeah, I don't know. Yeah, soon. I don't know."

"Jack, whatever is going on, you know you can talk to me, right?" she said.

What did she mean, whatever is going on? Why would something be going on? What would they talk about? When had they ever talked about shit? What would he even tell her? Would she still tell him she loved him? Why would she? Which him did she love? Which him didn't she love?

He looked back down at the ground. Where was the rabbit? Was it going to be okay?

Don't clench your fists. Don't get angry. Don't cry. Run. Nothing is wrong.