

JULIE

SHORT STORY: REMEMBERING BROOK

I practically flew out of her driveway. I could not get out of there fast enough. I heard the crunch of the gravel under my wheels and the ping as stones struck the car's undercarriage. I could not stand to see her lying there like that.

The weather was awful. The roads were coated with ice and untreated. What had compelled me to drive such a distance in such abysmal conditions? She had a hold on me that I couldn't explain. She called, and I went. But, I shouldn't have tonight.

I hadn't checked the directions as I sped away. I should have programmed my GPS. I just wanted to get home. I should have called John. JT would be sound asleep at this hour.

Suddenly, I thought of that Robert Frost poem, "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" and in particular the line that says, "And miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep." I had to put some distance between her and me. They'd discover her eventually. I pressed the heel of my right hand against my right eye to wipe away the tears that were starting, and dislodged a contact lens in the process. I fumbled to retrieve it, and fortunately found it stuck to my lower eyelash. I quickly popped it back in my eye.

The heater in the car was on the fritz again. I had to get it fixed. I'd tell John in the morning. In the meantime, I had to keep driving in the freezing cold dark night. I fiddled with the controls and repositioned the vents. I raised one balled fist and then the other to my mouth and blew warm breath on each. I could not get warm fast enough. I felt a chill run down my spine

What's going on?

bear?

What's their relationship?
childhood friends?
college roommates?

Why? How? ✓
necessary?

Delete hand to eye above?

Good!
Why?

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that I knew was deeper than the lack of heat in my car. For a split second, I took both hands off the wheel just to rub them together.

Suddenly the car was spinning out of control, but it seemed as if I were moving in slow motion. I saw trees, then highway, then a gray blur of sky, then trees and road again. It was like a picture in a Zoetrope, that salad spinner-like contraption that JT and I had just experimented with at the Science Museum last Saturday. We had drawn a stick figure standing on the ground and then a half inch above the bottom of the paper and so on until his head was touching the top of the page, so that when it was inserted in the Zoetrope and spun quickly, it looked as if he were jumping.

I instinctively peered into the back seat to see that JT was OK, but, of course, he wasn't there. I turned back to look through the windshield and my head hit the steering wheel. I saw stars and then nothingness.

I must have blacked out, because when I came to, I was staring through the windshield trying to make sense of this fuzzy blob that finally came into focus and turned out to be an evergreen in the distance. I shook my head to clear the haze, and slowly I started to make out my surroundings.

I gently pressed my right foot on the gas pedal. I applied slight pressure. Nothing. Another light pump. No movement. Finally out of desperation, I gunned the engine. The car roared back to life and shot forward.

I heard a crunch quite dissimilar to the sound of the stones on the driveway back there. There was something under my tires. It murmured softly over the howling of the wind. I rolled over the body. I listened to its gurgles. I smiled. I felt a sigh of relief. The car had stopped. Then, I felt sick to my stomach. What had I done? How much damage had I caused? I couldn't get out

Really?!

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and look. The back end of the car was wedged against the edge of dense woods. The car was facing the road, and I would need to drive over the body again in order to continue driving home.

too much?
I propelled myself forward. I urged myself to just get to the road and I'd be fine. I willed myself not to look back. I tried desperately to face forward and drive away. But, my conscience got the better of me and I darted a glance over my right shoulder at the sign on the metal post.

"Remembering Brook", it said. "Longest natural body of water in Nauset County."

A body of water would not be surging if the rocks are moving!

No dialogue, but it looks.

Ah! I thought Brook was her friend's name. Dead?

Ed

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* ambiguous: could be "I am remembering a person named Brook" or "this is a brook where I remember"

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crunch of the gravel under my wheels and the ping as stones struck the car's undercarriage. I couldn't stand to see her lying there like that.

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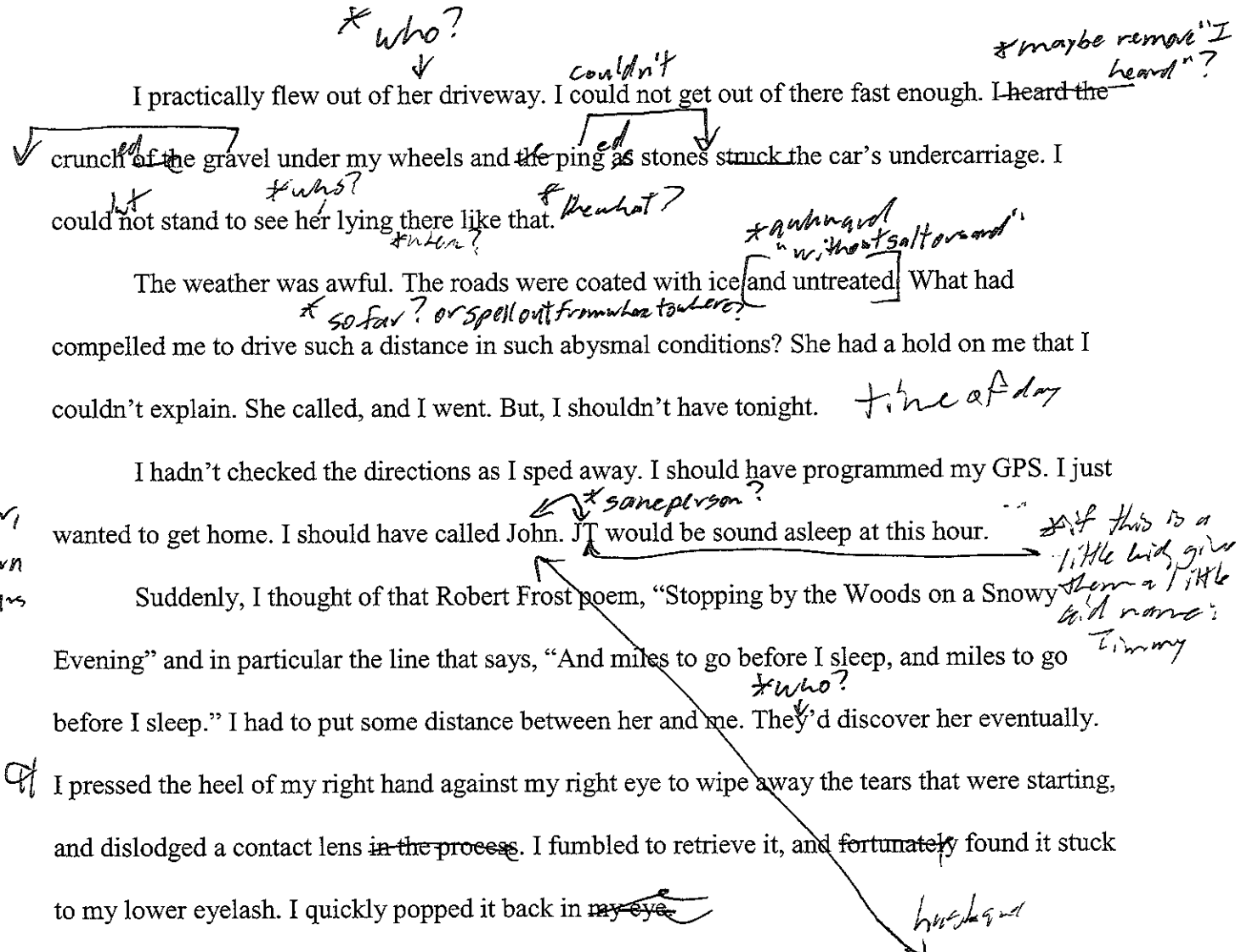
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- I like the tone, the atmosphere

* = comments I might make live

* so far, 3 unnamed characters



23

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* choppy or simpler

* condense? Zoetrope world. breaks the mood!

I instinctively peered into the back seat to see that JT was OK, but, of course, he wasn't there. I turned back to look through the windshield and my head hit the steering wheel. I saw stars, and then nothingness.

glanced

okay

* condense

I must have blacked out, because when I came to, I was staring through the windshield trying to make sense of this fuzzy blob that finally came into focus and turned out to be an evergreen in the distance. I shook my head to clear the haze, and slowly I started to make out my surroundings.

* what actually happens? what does she see?

I gently pressed my right foot on the gas pedal. I applied slight pressure. Nothing. Another light pump. No movement. Finally out of desperation, I gunned the engine. The car roared back to life and shot forward.

transition

* same

* is she really going to drive without being in control? is it all over?

I heard a crunch quite dissimilar to the sound of the stones on the driveway back there.

* oddly formal

There was something under my tires. It murmured softly over the howling of the wind. I rolled over the body. I listened to its gurgles. I smiled. I felt a sigh of relief. The car had stopped. Then, I felt sick to my stomach. What had I done? How much damage had I caused? I couldn't get out

* well, huh.

* how?

[?]

Ed

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* huh? can't picture

and look. The back end of the car was wedged against the edge of dense woods. The car was facing the road, and I would need to drive over the body again in order to continue driving home.

huh?

I propelled myself forward. I urged myself to just get to the road and I'd be fine. I willed myself not to look back. I tried desperately to face forward and drive away. But, my conscience got the better of me and I darted a glance over my right shoulder at the sign on the metal post.

"Remembering Brook", it said. "Longest natural body of water in Nauset County."

* huh?
→ so the "body" is a body of water?

* lots of unresolved questions

Sue

I practically flew out of her driveway. I could not get out of there fast enough. I heard the crunch of the gravel under my wheels and the ping as stones struck the car's undercarriage. I could not stand to see her lying there like that.

→ good

→ lots of sentences

The weather was awful. The roads were coated with ice and untreated. What had compelled me to drive such a distance in such abysmal conditions? She had a hold on me that I couldn't explain. She called, and I went. But I shouldn't have tonight.

begin w/ "I" need to break that up

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- everyone knows that line

→ tough to do driving

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I instinctively peered into the back seat to see that JT was OK, but, of course, he wasn't there. I turned back to look through the windshield and my head hit the steering wheel. I saw stars, ~~and~~ ^{and then} nothingness.

(I must have blacked out, because when I came to, I was staring through the windshield trying to make sense of this fuzzy blob that finally came into focus and turned out to be an evergreen in the distance) I shook my head to clear the haze, and slowly I started to make out my surroundings. ^{too long} ^{need more detail, because I can't picture where she's trying to extract herself from}

I gently pressed my right foot on the gas pedal. ~~I applied slight pressure.~~ Nothing. Another light pump. No movement. Finally out of desperation, I gunned the engine. The car roared ~~back~~ ^{to} life and shot forward.

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Sve

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"Remembering Brook", it said. "Longest natural body of water in Nauset County."

Overall, I'm not sure I can buy that a person would be that sad from looking at a river. Perhaps if something sad was happening in her life, but she seems happy, w/a husband and child at home.

Ray
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Ray

Page : 1 Line : 6 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014
Redundant

Page : 1 Line : 13 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Who is John? Who is JT? The writer could have said, "I should have called my husband, John. But our boy, JT would be asleep. I didn't want to wake him." That's provided that John is the husband and JT a shared child. A couple more words and you have a richer story.

Page : 1 Line : 17 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

New paragraph, because this is a new topic.

But again, is it germane to the story? Does this paragraph move the plot forward?

Page : 1 Line : 20 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

I would rearrange this paragraph. Perhaps:

It was bitterly cold. The car's heater was on the fritz again. I fiddled with the controls and vents, but got nothing but freezing air. I raised one balled fist, and then the other, to my mouth and blew warm air on them. There was a cold in me, something deeper than the lack of heat in the car.

R 11
SHORT STORY: REMEMBERING BROOK

blew warm breath on each. I could not get warm fast enough. I felt a chill run down my spine that I knew was deeper than the lack of heat in my car.

For a split second, I took both hands off the wheel just to rub them together.

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Redundant

is it spinning?

Ray

Page : 2 Line : 25 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Start new paragraph here.

Page : 2 Line : 27 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Again, these sentences just interrupt the action, yanking the readers attention off in another direction. Keep sentences short in action sequences.

Page : 2 Line : 33 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

When a car is spinning, the centripetal force is going to try to push the body of the driver out, away from the axis of spin. The driver would have to strain to try to see into the backseat. Think rag doll.

Page : 2 Line : 39 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Which were what? Here's a good place to give us a bit of description. What does the car look like to the protagonist? Is our hero hurt?

Page : 2 Line : 43 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

I'm very confused. How can the driver hear anything over the gunned engine? Why compare the sound to the stones of the driveway "back there?"

Page : 2 Line : 44 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Murmured, really, you're going with murmured? How about groaned, gave a death rattle, screamed, struggled for breath?

Page : 2 Line : 45 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

What in the world is there to smile about?

Ray

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I felt sick to my stomach. What had I done? How much damage had I caused? I couldn't get out and look. The back end of the car was wedged against the edge of dense woods. The car was facing the road, and I would need to drive over the body again in order to continue driving home.

I propelled myself forward. I urged myself to just get to the road and I'd be fine. I willed myself not to look back. I tried desperately to face forward and drive away. But, my conscience got the better of me and I darted a glance over my right shoulder at the sign on the metal post. "Remembering Brook", it said. "Longest natural body of water in Nauset County."

[Comments]

I'm not sure what to think about this story. Perhaps the fault lies with me, but I don't understand whatever it is the writer is trying to tell me. I feel like the writer is withholding information for no good reason. What harm would it do for me to know the gender of the protagonist or his/her relationship with John and JT? Who's going to be discovered?

If this is part of a larger work, all these little mysteries might be used to tease the reader along. But at no point should the reader be confused about anything except what the writer wants them to be confused about.

Ray

Page : 3 Line : 47 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

This would be easier to sell if the author had described the condition of the vehicle after the spin out.

Page : 3 Line : 48 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

First actual mention of a body. What body? Where did it suddenly come from?

Page : 3 Line : 49 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

Through sheer force of mind? Flapping arms? Perhaps something like: Resigned, I stepped on the accelerator and eased the car forward.

Page : 3 Line : 49 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

This sentence tries to convey two ideas and neither is done as well as they could be. How about something like: I told myself if I could just get the car back onto the road, I'd be fine.

Page : 3 Line : 52 Author : Ray Benjamin 12/12/2014

And at this point, I'm glad it's over because I'm confused and don't see how this last line relates to the rest of the story.

SHORT STORY: REMEMBERING BROOK

When a story starts with I - know who the story is about. This one starts with I - I know who the

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spouse
I know
grain

AKRen

24
11/1

SHORT STORY: REMEMBERING BROOK

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STICK
FIGURE
STORY

Appt

CAR
STOPPED

W2
BUSY

27
55 I

SHORT STORY: REMEMBERING BROOK

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"Remembering Brook", it said. "Longest natural body of water in Nauset County."

I MISSED the significance of the ending

2020
11/15