



The Last Cigarette on Earth

Benjamin Alire Sáenz

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A major Latino writer's intimate but healing journey through addiction, human desire and broken love.

From "He Leaves a Message in the Middle of the Night"

*He loved beer
and crack. He loved heroin, ecstasy, the sad music
of the bars. He said he loved you too. You are
thinking of the night you met him. Late October
night, the breeze as soft as his black eyes. He was
so hungry for trouble. You were so hungry
for anything that resembled love. Your finger
tracing the tattoos on his chest, you dreamed
of living in the prison of his arms. But you refused
to live in the prison of his deadly nights. You
can't survive without the morning
light. You repeat this again and again:
He's a man, not an illness. Tattoos and prison.
Novels and poems. A bird can love a fish but they can't
live in your apartment. He called again last night
and left a message that was meant to wound.*

*He said: I want to know what you meant when
you said I love you. You said: I love you. I meant I love you.
He said: I want to know what you meant when
you said goodbye. You said: Goodbye. I meant goodbye.*

You whispered his name in the dark.

Benjamin Alire Sáenz in 2013 won the Pen/Faulkner Award and the Lambda Award for his book *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*. His young adult novel *Dante and Aristotle in Paradise* was a 2013 Printz Honoree. He lives in El Paso, Texas.

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