



Krakow

Sean Akerman

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Krakow reminds its audience that even if love ends, the marks it leaves are indelible.

Krakow, a novella by Sean Akerman, draws on journaling fads and the failures of couples counseling to explore the beginning and end of love in the outer reaches of contemporary Brooklyn.

A first-person prologue sets up the story to follow. Two journals are discovered in an otherwise empty apartment. One was written by a man, the other by a woman. Realizing that they make up two sides of the same breakup story, the narrator quickly hands the journals over to his audience.

The man's account comes first. It's a risky introduction, as his journal is less accessible. He rambles, self-indulges, and has a stream-of-consciousness style. He focuses on his feelings of grief and longing, as well as his depression and lack of employment.

Scenes are detailed but often take place in unclear times. Stylistically, his account is reminiscent of 1960s black-and-white art films, with blurred backgrounds and many closeups; prose subtly suggests that he is incapable of honesty.

Following his account and taking up the same amount of room comes the woman's journal. Unlike her former lover, she seems grounded in reality. She has a job and a life populated by family and friends. Her partner's life and former relationships emerge more clearly in her account than they do in his own telling, so that previous incidents are given context. The questions raised but never answered in the first journal are illuminated here.

The woman's journal conveys pain and a lack of self-pity, making it the more reliable version of their affair. But ever present is the reality that these are two versions of the same story, told by the only two people who were there.

Not only will the audience never know exactly what went wrong, but it's likely that different readers will read the story in different ways, depending on their own experiences.

Krakow, titled after a trip the couple took together, is a reminder that even if love ends, the marks it leaves are indelible.

SUSAN WAGGONER (January/February 2018)

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