

“**A** Man Escaped” is the only surviving remnant from my first attempt at novel writing. When I began it, Aaron Levy was a supporting character. It was not until the end of my draft that I realized I was far more interested in him than in the central protagonist. I wanted to explore his particular mix of Freudian angst, emotional cowardice, and self-sabotaged attempts at separating from his family and their cultural and class biases. When it became clear to me that the novel wasn’t working, a friend suggested I rewrite it from Aaron’s perspective. I think I cried when she told me this. The tank was empty. It was not until five years later that I truly considered her suggestion, and while I didn’t think the character could sustain my interest for three-hundred-something pages, his exploits during that fall of 1955 seemed to have just the right rhythm and arc for a shorter form.

—*Kim Brooks*



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