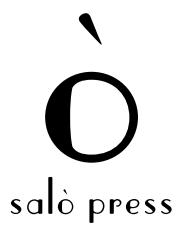


# Rites & Passages

**James Knight**

*Flirtation #10*



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*For Louis, whose love and support have always  
been deeply appreciated*





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## One

Starting again I think at the entrance to the passage. Barely noticing any longer the walls the floor ceiling lighting, though perhaps a description of these elements is necessary to understand them, to understand where I am, my place in all this. The passage from this point-of-view extends to a distant vanishing point nearly invisible, not quite, a block at the terminus the end something dark a doorway probably either an open doorway into a dark space or a closed door. Lighting is uneven a sickly yellow emanating from strips occupying much of the ceiling giving the whole passage a clinical appearance or rather that of a rundown hospital a military facility perhaps where lights are installed to illuminate objects and not to provide comfort or the illusion of warmth uneven yellow light further down the passage flickering blinking on and off at irregular intervals contributing to the overall impression of dilapidation or dereliction. The faulty lighting is obviously designed to create a particular atmosphere. Le fond du couloir est éclairé. You can see the dark surface of a door certainly a door you can see that now not just an opening

walls constructed from identical panels containing a rectilinear pattern two shades of grey and a dull blue how would you describe it gunmetal

nothing else to report

here at least

The floor is nondescript metallic grilled  
divided into square panels each grille two vertical bars two  
horizontal leaving nine small square holes

your boots make a reassuringly solid clang

only other sound the fizzing light

palm against the door pushing it open

I am here  
and not here

EAST: TWO  
WEST: FIVE

## Two: intersection

there are four of them  
each sits behind a screen

their voices bleed blue  
and two shades of grey

telling you/him to walk crouch jump  
run

nails and screens  
make a meat weapon

NORTH: ELEVEN  
EAST: THREE  
SOUTH: TWELVE  
WEST: ONE

Three

This passage is essentially identical to the one before in appearance again some of the lights are flickering not in the same places as before there is a longer stretch of darkness ahead in which the fluorescent bulb buzzes on only for half a second or so at a time roughly every six seconds hardly worth mentioning but completeness is important if this is to be an accurate record of what passed. Of what is passing. The *now* is key here: sensation or illusion of immersion in an experience. I have to make it a running commentary

glancing back

something like a metallic dog

re membering

so corny the door reached barged open

slammed shut just in time

EAST: FOUR  
WEST: TWO

## Four: intersection

the correct word for dog is wolf  
the correct word for wolf is machine

our blood smells of oil  
we are driven

sixteen little deaths and counting  
nine little squares of nothing

dreamy seasons in hell  
when you control a body controlling a body

NORTH: FOURTEEN  
EAST: FIVE  
SOUTH: FIFTEEN  
WEST: THREE

## Five

Ritual is repetition embued with symbolic meaning.

This is the same passage again, the same colours and lighting, the same rectilinear design on the panels along the walls. Beneath your feet, the same square grilles. Here though you see a glimmer of movement beneath the grilles, streaks of sickly yellow light appearing and disappearing changing shape little snakes. Crouching, you look closer. There is water down there, a foot or so beneath the grilled surface of the floor, moving rapidly you can hear it now too water probably though black glimmering yellow in places under the yellow light from the fluorescent bulbs reflecting the bulbs that run across the whole length of the ceiling. What could it be other than water maybe oil black oil or something else you let your mind wander picturing similar settings in other imaginary worlds fabricated for our entertainment other amusing hellscapes the fast moving fluid could be a river of blood from the victims of the monsters that inhabit this place that invaded this place or a river of synthetic blood the lifeblood of the setting itself the base the hellscape a terrible liquid feeding the biomechanical organs of the beast. If you could smell it you could tell if it isn't water. You could smell oil or blood. But of course you can't smell anything here. The sense of smell does not exist.

Mais l'hôpital n'est qu'un bâtiment militaire

So the ritual of the corridor walk. Again the solid clang of boots on metal grilles again the monotonous tension again the hostile lights strobing.

EAST: ONE

WEST: FOUR

## Six

This passage is familiar. You can see the dark surface of a door certainly a door you can see that now not just an opening. Le fond du couloir est éclairé. The faulty lighting is obviously designed to create a particular atmosphere. Lighting is uneven a sickly yellow emanating from strips occupying much of the ceiling giving the whole passage a clinical appearance or rather that of a rundown hospital a military facility perhaps where lights are installed to illuminate objects and not to provide comfort or the illusion of warmth uneven yellow light further down the passage flickering blinking on and off at irregular intervals contributing to the overall impression of dilapidation or dereliction. The passage from this point-of-view extends in either direction to a distant door nearly invisible, not quite

something has dropped from the ceiling at the relatively well-lit end of the corridor dropped with a growling clang four legs braced for the fall straightening slowly its shape suggestive of a wolf or like the outline of a wolf filled in with nothing with black with I can see now it's starting to move towards me head lowered as if following a scent with polished black metal or glass catching the yellow light as it moves liquid yellow light slicking over it

a sickly yellow

EAST: SEVEN  
WEST: TEN

## Seven: intersection

the grey rectilinear structures  
are hostile entities

their mouths issue gunmetal words  
in spaces you cannot read

relying on the screen to tell you  
you go round in squares

yellow memory countermands  
eyes grow filmy

NORTH: TWELVE  
EAST: EIGHT  
SOUTH: THIRTEEN  
WEST: SIX

## Eight

This place is probably a military facility or hospital. If I had paid more attention earlier, when the story the backstory was being explained, if I had paid attention during the exposition instead of impatiently skipping half of it I would know, and that would help him now. Because I am now him

marvelling at my own gloved hands, the futuristic  
body armour on my forearms  
decorated with a rectilinear pattern  
two shades of grey and a dull blue

how would you describe it

gunmetal

EAST: NINE  
WEST: SEVEN

## Nine: intersection

the only colours are gunmetal blue  
yellow black two shades of grey

red is not yet permitted  
you will have to wait

the entities have shiny grey flesh  
hard cases like you

you him me  
navigating the blocky noosphere

NORTH: FIFTEEN  
EAST: TEN  
SOUTH: SIXTEEN  
WEST: EIGHT

## Ten

This passage immediately reveals itself to be distinct from the others, not because the architecture differs in any obvious way, but because there is a figure crouching in it, what looks from behind like a well-built man in a futuristic combat uniform. I approach him cautiously. He could be an enemy. He could and probably will turn suddenly towards me when I am very close and scream at me through fangs or through a face destroyed by fire. He could and probably will

no way of talking to him  
save with my fists  
in this world I am mute

I walk around him

Le soldat, les yeux grands ouverts, continue de  
fixer la pénombre

Staring down at the floor or rather past the floor through the iron grilles assuming they are made of iron or the simulacrum of iron what's he doing doesn't register me at all or he doesn't appear to register me

reminded of quotations from that French novel  
that one about a labyrinth

looking intently at or through the metal grilles  
listening

rushing water

crouching with him seeing the glossy agitation of  
a fast moving liquid

running the length of the corridor in the  
direction I was going

Le soldat continue de fixer la pénombre

EAST: SIX  
WEST: NINE

## Eleven

Unexpectedly, he finds himself in a passage in which the lighting is bright and even, still the colour of late-night car parks and jaundice, but evenly distributed no flickering fluorescent tubes no dips in the overall intensity. It is not clear what he is supposed to do. The passage contains no obvious narrative clues. There is a door at the other end, naturally; how could this be a passage if it didn't end in a doorway of some description? He thinks, or rather I think, he probably just needs to walk down the corridor to get to the door, beyond which the story will make itself apparent, there will be direction. It could be that the act of walking itself triggers an event that has been lying in wait since the world was made: a chasm may open in the floor at his feet, the ceiling may collapse on him, or a door may open to trigger the entrance of a fleshy assemblage of yowling mechanisms. To go down the corridor may be to invite danger.

He remains still, looking down the passage to the door at the other end. *Le soldat est seule, il regarde la porte devant laquelle il se trouve. I don't know what to do.*

He turns to the wall. It could be that the walls themselves contain a clue, some sort of indication of what to do. There may be buttons to press, activating secret doorways or causing a panel to open with a dramatic hiss of compressed air, revealing a small arsenal of aesthetically pleasing outlandish weaponry. He turns to the wall. I look at the wall

constructed from identical square panels  
containing a rectilinear pattern  
    square border in light grey  
    two vertical bars in the same grey  
    two horizontal bars darker grey as if to make  
        them look recessed  
    nine small gunmetal blue squares in the gaps  
        between the bars

where the vertical and horizontal bars intersect the lighter grey shade persists again adding to the impression that the vertical bars are set in front of the horizontal bars and suggesting that the two sets of bars do not intersect at all the vertical ones being in front the horizontal ones behind

impossible to tell for sure

the two sets of bars may simply have been designed in  
    two different shades of grey

no clues here

the sensation of being on the periphery  
    of something dramatic

NORTH: THIRTEEN  
SOUTH: TWO

## Twelve

This place is probably a hotel, judging by the decor, which is designed to look homely but gives instead the impression of oppressive rectilinearity the wallpaper and carpet sharing an unattractive design a series of large squares each divided into nine smaller squares by the intersections of two vertical and two horizontal bars everything in shades of grey and dull blue.

looking around is all I can do

marvelling at my own gloved hands, the futuristic  
 body armour on my forearms  
 decorated with grids or grilles  
 same pattern as the decor

Sur la droite du corridor comme sur la gauche donnent des portes latérales, à intervalles égaux et alternant de façon régulière, une à droite, une à gauche, une à droite, etc...

but there are no doors along the walls of the corridors

the jaundiced light

hotels have their own smell  
cleanliness fresh linen warm order

here smells of nothing

what kind of hotel is this



NORTH: TWO  
SOUTH: SEVEN

## Thirteen

Noir. Déclic. Clarté jaune. Déclic. Noir.

This passage is familiar. Some of the lights are flickering there is a long stretch of darkness ahead in which the fluorescent bulb buzzes on only for half a second or so at a time roughly every six seconds hardly worth mentioning but completeness is important if this is to be an accurate record of what is passing.

What passes.

To pass is to go beyond, to abstain, to die.

what kind of hotel

Noir. Déclic. Clarté jaune. Déclic. Noir.

if you can describe the world as it presents itself  
to your senses  
chiefly your eyesight  
perhaps you can keep  
death  
at bay

nothing much

to

report

NORTH: SEVEN  
SOUTH: ELEVEN

## Fourteen

Ritual is repetition embued with symbolic meaning.

This is the same passage again, the same colours and lighting, the same rectilinear wallpaper design. Beneath your feet, the same carpet.

something has dropped from the ceiling at the relatively well-lit end of the corridor dropped with a yowling thump four legs braced for the impact straightening swiftly its shape suggestive of a monstrous dog or some unearthly predator filled in with nothing with glimmering voids with now you notice it's starting to stalk towards you head low as if following a scent with scratched black metal or glass catching the yellow light as it moves liquid light slicking over its contours

a sickly yellow

As if following a scent. But of course you can't smell anything here. The sense of smell does not exist.

strange hotel corridor with no doors leading off it  
save those at either end

a sort of metallic dog

Again the ritual of flight. Again the muffled thud of rushing footsteps again the monotonous tension again the hostile lights.

my health is low

NORTH: SIXTEEN  
SOUTH: FOUR

## Fifteen

I feel sick from staring so long at these corridors creeping down these corridors the square divided into nine small squares repeated everywhere the walls the floor even the forearms of his futuristic body armour as if the square is somehow central to the narrative as if the whole story is dominated by the square and its adjacency to the next identical square repeated ad infinitum ad nauseam these squares these grilles these noughts-and-crosses grids this endless game because it is just a game this endless game I can't win this narrative game with no clear direction in which the clues as to how to progress are presumably all around him but indecipherable

the scene resembles a corridor in hell

something like a dog in the shadows ahead

Plus le soldat s'avance, plus il a l'impression de voir cette image reculer. Mais, sur la côté droit, une des portes s'est ouverte.

but there is no door to right or left

retreating where there's no light

feel sick



NORTH: FOUR  
SOUTH: NINE

## Sixteen

I think at the entrance to the passage  
a description  
from this point-of-view

to illuminate objects

Le fond du couloir est

a rectilinear pattern

how would you describe it

I am

and not



NORTH: NINE  
SOUTH: FOURTEEN





James Knight is an experimental poet and digital artist. His books include *Void Voices* (Hesterglock Press), *Self Portrait by Night* (Sampson Low), *Chimera* (Penteract Press) and *Machine* (Trickhouse Press). Website: [thebirdking.com](http://thebirdking.com). Twitter: [twitter.com/badbadpoet](https://twitter.com/badbadpoet)

