

I wrote “The Shelter” very quickly, a few weeks after finishing my first novel, and a few days after realizing no one was going to publish it any time soon. It was the first story I had written in nearly three years, and I think of it now as a gift from my subconscious, a consolation for three years of frustration.

It was August and I’d been spending a lot of time moping and watching CNN. There was a segment about a dog that had been abandoned in a war zone. They showed it pushing its snout through a crack in a window, recorded its horrible whimpering. I cried until my sinuses clogged, and when I collapsed on my bed to collect myself, André’s voice was narrating the story to me and all I had to do was sit down and write it. I was enchanted by this character—his bravery and his pain and his imperfect devotion. His voice and story consoled me during a difficult time, similar to the way he and Yalla are able to console each other, offer each other a glimmer of something untainted in a place of desolation.

—*Kim Brooks*

