

# 5 AM – I need questions

By Holly Lisle

I already know a lot about this story, but I'm at the middle – the 'I hate middles' middle, where things start to go wrong. And I cannot afford to have them go wrong again. I need the right question to take me through the middle and to the end. This is, in this case, a twenty-five page challenge rather than a twelve-hundred one. Nevertheless, stories are fractals. Even with the small ones, it all has to be there.

Questions. Please bear with me as I think with my fingers.

God, 5 AM sucks.

Questions.

Girl. Boy. Stalker. Ghost. Who has a secret that has not yet been revealed? Who has an ulterior motive? Everyone is on stage, who can die who hasn't already? Who is lying, and about what? Who is telling a truth that isn't being believed?

Lies. That could be interesting. So far the heroes are pretty pure. Beleaguered, tortured, wounded – but not dishonest. But a scar or two on the souls of the heroes might not be such a bad thing. Nothing heinous. Neither could have, for example, killed someone. But what sort of lie might stand between them – something that could strain trust even as they fall deeper into a situation where trusting each other is the only thing that is going to keep the two of them breathing?

He's not a trusting soul. He has plenty of reason not to be. She has a past that would already make her suspect. So if he's hiding something, he'd have that extra bit of guilt that would cause him to think that everyone else is lying, too. Especially her, because he wants to trust her, and to him, this in itself is suspect. Where is he weakest? Where could

one extra cut beneath the skin really drive him crazy?

Yes. She tells him the truth, and he doesn't believe her because he has said something similar and it was a lie, and the only other woman he loved said exactly the same thing, and it was a huge lie. She turns away from him, hurt; he turns away from her, angry and disgusted with himself for almost being a sucker again. Enter the stalker, with a clear path. And the ghost, with a mission.

Bingo. There's my day.

Contents © Holly Lisle. <https://hollylisle.com> All Rights Reserved