



# The Last Cigarette on Earth

*Benjamin Alire Sáenz*

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**The Last Cigarette on Earth** Benjamin Alire Sáenz

A major Latino writer's intimate but healing journey through addiction, human desire and broken love.

From "He Leaves a Message in the Middle of the Night"

*He loved beer  
and crack. He loved heroin, ecstasy, the sad music  
of the bars. He said he loved you too. You are  
thinking of the night you met him. Late October  
night, the breeze as soft as his black eyes. He was  
so hungry for trouble. You were so hungry  
for anything that resembled love. Your finger  
tracing the tattoos on his chest, you dreamed  
of living in the prison of his arms. But you refused  
to live in the prison of his deadly nights. You  
can't survive without the morning  
light. You repeat this again and again:  
He's a man, not an illness. Tattoos and prison.  
Novels and poems. A bird can love a fish but they can't  
live in your apartment. He called again last night  
and left a message that was meant to wound.*

*He said: I want to know what you meant when  
you said I love you. You said: I love you. I meant I love you.  
He said: I want to know what you meant when  
you said goodbye. You said: Goodbye. I meant goodbye.*

*You whispered his name in the dark.*

**Benjamin Alire Sáenz** in 2013 won the Pen/Faulkner Award and the Lambda Award for his book *Everything Begins and Ends at the Kentucky Club*. His young adult novel *Dante and Aristotle in Paradise* was a 2013 Printz Honoree. He lives in El Paso, Texas.

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