

SAMMY CLARK

BY NATHAN DALE



I had a friend named Sammy Clark.

His hair was perfectly preened. Split clean down the middle like something biblical. Two wings on each side of his head. They took flight when he walked.

He carried a Goody comb in his back pocket.
Red meant trouble.

His was black.

Sammy moved in when I was thirteen. He was a year older.

We used to play football in the neighborhood.

He ran like he already had a scholarship somewhere.

Sometimes he'd slow down and run like a cartoon just to make the rest of us mad.

But athletics didn't inspire him.
Girls did.

By fifteen he stopped answering the knock at the door.

His sister would say,
"Sammy's gone."

Then I'd see him ride past a minute later.

Sleeveless shirt.
Parachute pants.
His left ear pierced.

His parents would always warn him,
"Samuel, you be careful now."

One night I saw a tow truck at his house.

It lowered the station wagon into the driveway.

Sammy's dad was standing in the yard.
Hands in his pockets.

A sheriff's car pulled up.

I saw Sammy in the back seat.

Red lights colored his face.

Sammy was gone.

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