

Dog Snoring Like An Old Man

It was daylight at six in the morning. The dog was snoring like an old man. Wilton sat in silence and waited for the clock to reach seven. Two light bulbs in the ceiling, two lamps and a television all switched off. A hot smell of sleep came in the form of breath from his family up the stairs.

Wilton sat and thought about his life. He was afraid of dying. No one could stop him from fading away, leaving behind his sleeping family. His neck tie and his shoelaces knotted up on the carpet.

By seven o'clock he left the house and got on the train into the city. Out of the window he saw a wide open space of dirt and further away were rows of terraced houses. The wind blew a Union Flag hung at a window. As he got closer to the city the wind picked up, trees silently danced side-by-side.

He worked for a newspaper. When he got to work Nelson, his editor was waiting for him. Wilton hadn't realised how late he was but he walked in anyway without paying much attention to anything. Wilton and Nelson were good friends. Nelson often thought of himself first thing in the morning. He touched his face when he spoke, just to feel his own mouth working. 'Do you have the press release?' he said.

'Which?'

'The press release. For our client.'

'No.'

'Why not?'

'I didn't know how to write it.'

'I need it written up by this afternoon,' Nelson said. 'Can you manage that?'

'I can manage,' Wilton said. He set about writing at his desk. There was no colour in the room. Everything seemed grey. Trees slowly moved outside.

After work Wilton and Nelson went to *The Farmer's Arms* for a drink. The barmaid said, 'See that man over there?'

'Where?'

'There. By the window. With the hat.'

'Yeah.'

'He's been coming in here for fifteen years and used to be the life of this place. But now all he does is sit there, drinking.'

'What happened to him?'

'His dog committed suicide.'

'That's terrible.'

'I know. Hung itself with its own lead from the banister.'

'How did it manage that?'

'God knows,' she said. 'All's I know is that man's not been the same since.'

The two friends sat down near the door. It was cool there. The light was fading. Nelson drank. 'Imagine that,' he said.

'What?'

'A dog killing itself.'

'Yeah,' Wilton said. 'I thought only people did that. Not dogs.'

'Makes you think how ridiculous it would be to kill yourself.'

'Or how ridiculous it is to die.'

'Dogs committing suicide,' Nelson said, shaking his head.

Later, when it became dark and there really was no colour, Wilton headed back home. The wind had picked up considerably. It blew his hair. Made his eyes water. His coat blew open and he wrapped it around his body to keep warm. On the train he saw the Union Flag in the dark. He

doubted sunlight for a long time to come.

When he got home his family were asleep as if they'd never woken up. He somehow felt good about himself. He took out the shoelaces from his shoes and scrunched his tie into his pocket so the dog couldn't get hold of them. He walked into the living room and sat down. It was dark. Two lights, two lamps and the TV were off. The smell of his family, sleeping. The dog snoring like an old man.

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