

Winter Boots

I wake up from what I feel was a very deep sleep. Was I dreaming? I can't quite remember. I look around the room. Everything looks familiar yet different somehow. I would compare it to the sensation I might have, if I were ever to return to the house I grew up in, but left a long time ago. The walls would all be the same, but the furniture and everything else would be altered.

I get up and walk into the kitchen. I look for the light switch but don't find it right away. The glow from the digital clock on the face of stove is strong enough to bounce light off the other stainless steel appliances, and provide me with a path into the rest of the house. What is most puzzling however is the smell. Once again it feels somewhat familiar but I just can't place why it doesn't feel right; sterile almost.

By this point my eyes have nearly adjusted to the lack of light and I can pretty much make my way around the rest of the main floor. As I head down the hall I can see the outline of a dog sleeping on the floor. Do I own a pet? This is the first sense that doesn't feel right. The dog lifts his head. I give him the back of my hand, as a form of identification, like I would a passport to a border patrol guard. He sniffs my hand, and then lies back down, seemingly content that I am familiar to him. I take this as a sign that I am allowed to proceed.

To my right I can hear the sound running water coming from the powder room next to the front entrance. The door to the bathroom is three quarters closed. At first I am hesitant to open it. I turn around back towards the dog, as if to ask him for advice but he has vanished.

The door is wide open now. There are not any windows inside the small bathroom so my eyes are not able to penetrate inside. I reach for the light switch and flick it on. I am taken back when I see the image before me in the mirror. I must be at least ninety years old. My hair is long, white and scraggly. I don't look like I weigh much more than one hundred and twenty pounds. My shoulders are hunched; my eyes grey and tired. I look ready to walk through death's door. I continue to stare for what feels like eternity until suddenly the reflection in the mirror begins to brighten, and eventually transforms into an overpowering white radiance that illuminates the whole room. So bright I can barely see at all, as if I am looking directly into the sun. Then within the light's bright aura, I think I can make out some type of image, but then as quick as it appears, it is gone. It is pitch dark again inside the tiny room.

I turn around to walk out, and then I see them. My old pair of winter boots lying on the floor directly in front of me. I recognize them but I am puzzled because they look like they have never been worn. I take this as a sign that I need to venture outside so I step into them on foot at a time. They seem to fit much better than I remember; almost if they have been tailored for my feet. I realize I am only wearing my pyjamas so I grab a coat that is hanging on a hook beside the door. I reached down to lace up my boots when I realize they are already tied.

I open the front door and feel the rush of winter against my face. Once again, my eyes take a few seconds to adjust to the change in lighting. The layer of snow that covers the landscape that reflects the moonlight helps this to happen within a few seconds. I walk to the bottom of the driveway and all I can hear is the sound of the snow crackling beneath my winter boots, reminding me of the Fizz candy I used to snack on as a child.

I look around the street but I don't see anyone. There are not any cars or any lights on in any of the houses. Then I see him again; the same dog that was inside my house only a few minutes earlier. He doesn't bark and only looks at me before he turns and walks off into the distance. Everything is still again; only the sound of my winter boots settling into the snow captures my senses.

All of a sudden there is a deafening sound in the otherwise noiseless environment. I slowly awake and realize my alarm is going off. Like my dream before, it is once again pitch dark in my bedroom. The clock on my alarm reads six thirty. I get up from my bed with a sense of déjà vu and walk into the kitchen before stopping dead in my tracks when I see my winter boots a top of the counter snow dripping from their rubber soles.