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Morning Raid

by Nick Parnell

As was their custom they came for me at 3am. The point of deepest sleep, of least resistance. I was ripped from my forgotten dreams by the splintering implosion of the front door and the stamping of many feet on the hollow wooden stairs.

Four soldiers surrounded my bed. Emboldened by their black and red uniforms and heavy guns they were, nevertheless, young and nervous, looking to each other, breathing hard and not only from the exertion.

A moment of silence.

I looked at each one in turn and saw my fear reflected in the deep sorrows of their eyes. Then the leader strolled in, as if on a Sunday walk along the canal path beyond the woods. He was wearing a pinstripe suit complete with waistcoat.

At his approach the uniforms stiffened, increasing the grip on their weapons. The leader stood casually, hands in pockets, and looked down at me as I sat on the edge of the bed. Despite my terror I looked directly into his eyes. I don't know what I was expecting to find or what I hoped to achieve. A connection perhaps or just to show my defiance, that I would not be cowed. But there was nothing there. Sure he had eyes, they were green with upper lids that sagged and surmounted by dense, well-defined black eyebrows.

They were handsome eyes but they did not shine, there were no creases in the skin at their edges and there was no reflection of any kind. I might as well have been looking into the dark orbits of a skull.

Without any sign of his intention he quickly and gracefully extended his left arm out towards my head and in the same fluid movement grasped a handful of my hair and then whipped his arm back propelling me onto the floor at his feet. Despite the result the action itself was strangely without violence or anger. He took my place on the bed and looked down at me once again as I lay crumpled on the floor.

“Mr Smith, you know why we have come, do you not?” His tone was as hollow as a grey Monday morning.

“Is it about the TV licence?” I ventured a joke, unconsciously trying to evoke some emotion. One of the soldiers spluttered a laugh. The suit turned to its source.

“That is not necessary. Go and wait in the van with Gregor.” The soldier started to shake and had to be pushed by a comrade towards the door.

“No Mr Smith, it is not about the TV licence. It is more serious than that. There will be no fine. Defying the party carries the penalty of death.”

My mind cleared. I looked to each soldier, pleading into their eyes. The one behind the bed understood and instantly threw his gun to me.

No emotion was betrayed in the face of the green eyes as I aimed and pulled the trigger.