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## She lay in the dark

by Victoria Cooper

She lay in the dark and knew everything. She knew the pain she had inflicted and the wounds she had made. She ignored them but she knew. She waited for her offspring to call, for them to write. She waited. She had listened out for footsteps on the gravel, she had held her breath. Waiting.

No phone call came and no letter was sent.

She stared up at the ceiling and smiled to herself. They were just taking their time before they could bring her their apology. Like her old cat dropping a mouse at her feet, she was certain they would come. Their atonement would lay heavy on them, they would be tearful and remorseful but she knew if she waited, they would be there.

As the broken mantel clock stood waiting to chime again and the cancer kept growing inside his belly, she waited. As her half-crazed daughter moved across the country desperate to make a new home, she waited. She waited for the happy ever after and the moral at the end of the story. She waited for them to beg for forgiveness.

She would receive it like the body of Christ and they would be there asking for deliverance and she would deign to receive them. She would accept their carking apologies and she would open her withered arms and black heart to them. They would shiver in their sleep like small children do but they would repent and she would re-possess.

Except I know; for I am the wind that rattles her windows and pulls her blanket closer around her drooped shoulders. I am the cool autumnal breeze that blew out the summer warmth and wakes her from her fitful dreams.

I know what she knows and I know that they will never come and see her. The needle and the damage have been done. They are far from her now and while they crave her presence, they do not want to swallow any more of her bile.

She lay in her bed counting the memories that she no longer has rights to and yet only they allow her to rest despite bringing her closer to death.

There will be no reckoning or forgiving for her while she wheezes her last breath. Her body is failing her and she knows this too as it is old and has endured such bitterness and cruelty. She will be alone when the final moments come and only I will be witness to her leaving this world. I will record the moment and pass it on but there will be no relief or sadness from this passing. It will just be.

I will blow out as I blew in and I will be gone; free from this alleged impartiality that I am shackled to. I will whisper into the ears of those she waited for and then they will know everything too while they lay in the dark waiting for her.