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## The Afternoon Nap

by Candida Lloyd

She lay in the dark and knew everything. Dusk had crept in through the open living room curtains and wrapped around her. Outside the branches of the leafless trees were disappearing into the winter sky and the moon was yet appear.

Cariad had had a glass of wine at lunch time, something she never did and as soon as the meal was over, she remembered why. Lethargy overcame her, so she excused herself from an afternoon walk with the others, on the grounds that she needed to stay at home and do the clearing up. But once wellies had been found, and poo bags for the dog, trips to the toilet had been made and the general faffing that preceded any outing (however small) was over, she allowed herself to lie down on the sofa and pull up a throw.

What bliss to enjoy the stillness of the late afternoon and a moment without any pressing demands. She pushed away thoughts of work, the car that needed servicing, the laundry that was piled up all over the house and the shopping to be ordered for the week ahead. Instead she enjoyed the fuzzy feeling the wine had given her and allowed her thoughts to roam around.

She wished she hadn't nagged her family so much before they'd left the house; their absence induced in her a wave of warmth towards them. What if something bad were to happen to them; terrible things happened every day on the news. From now on she would be more patient and less shouty. The mess, the demands, the arguments all receded – none of this was important. She knew, with absolute clarity in that darkened room, that her loved ones were the only thing that mattered.

Satisfied with this, Cariad allowed her loving feelings to extend further and she thought about her mother and how she would die one day, probably not any day soon. But still, one day. And so, Cariad would try to appreciate her more. Yes, she would call her later and leave aside all the usual feelings of irritation and make a real effort to listen.....her mind was now freefalling into that state somewhere between wakefulness and sleep; she was on the precipice of glorious slumber.

With a jolt she found her mouth had been hanging open and her head ached. The family announced their return by slamming the front door and turning on the light which poured into the living room. The dog barked and pawed at her for food. Couldn't someone else feed him for a change? Why was she always the one to do it? Cariad threw off the blanket, dragged her heavy body to the kitchen to bung some food in the dog bowl. Then she piled clothes into the washing machine and began loading dishes into the dishwasher. Her previous blissed-out state had returned to familiar crankiness. The telephone rang and she let it go to voicemail. Only her mother ever rang the house phone.