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## A Noisy Evil

by Rosalyn Hurst

Day 1 March:

The day starts well. For once I had a night of fairly unbroken sleep. My friend Sadie had dropped in with my winnings. I rarely bet, never been in a betting shop but when I saw that name I had to put a fiver on. Al Boum Photo took the gold cup for a second time and that deserved a large gin and tonic. I wake to Darren screaming down the lane on his motorbike, the village holds its collective death as he approached the zig-zag bend with lots of back firing, breathes in relief, he has made it without crashing, and in a few minutes the sounds fade, drowned by the early planes circling for Gatwick.

Zac crawls in beside me, still sleepy.

“Another ten minutes and when I hear the bus I will get up,” he promises, and then the heartbreaking question, a morning routine, “did you see Daddy up in the stars? Grandma says he is up there looking down on us. Did you see him? Did you see him?”

There are times I could willingly strangle Alice, my mother-in-law, but I suppose it is her way of dealing with grief. She wanted to put, “I am not dead I did not die” on his gravestone but the cemetery would only allow the meanest of headstones. Now she tells Zac that his Daddy is there looking down on him and her, no mention of me of course.

I have had six months of living just with my son, gradually getting lonelier as, after, all the drama of his death, the times our so called friends calling around began to diminish. Still I have Zac, a roof over my head and I am really looking forward to getting back to teaching in the summer term.

I hug Zac saying, “I looked, but last night I could see the stars, too many clouds,” and that seems to satisfy him.

Then the clank of the early bus as it hits a pot hole, the build up of planes approaching, departing and circling Gatwick, the early morning traffic rat-running the lanes; time to get up.

Day 2 April

Zac is shaking me, "mummy. Mummy, are you dead too?" there is panic in his little voice, "mummy there is something wrong, I'm frightened."

"Hey what's up my little fellow?" I ask, while looking at the alarm clock, "good grief, I have overslept, I have not done that for many months."

Zac creeps in and pulls the sheet over his head, I look down on his curly hair, just like his father's and for a moment I have tears in my eyes.

"Come on pet," I say trying to give him his morning cuddle, but he pulls away.

"Something is wrong," and the starts crying. I go downstairs and yes there is something wrong. I open the back door, coffee in hand, I cannot understand and then it hits me with such force.

It is the silence, the complete and utter silence, no planes, no traffic nothing. And then I look up, I am staggered, the brilliant blue sky, no planes trails.

Day 3 June

Sadie comes around. She is so excited. She insists we sit out in the garden tonight Musk is launching 60 satellites, coming over about ten o'clock got to see them. She is noisy but so good hearted. Ten o'clock, Zac comes down, wrapped in his 'comfort' blanket.

"Here they come," Sadie screams, we can hear neighbours shouting too, "Look Look!"

And in magnificent procession the star laden black night, they come, one then another, then more driving a pathways through the night sky.

"And listen," I say, "the nightingale is singing."

"And Daddy must be up there on one of those, along with all the other daddies, a procession of daddies," and he chuckles and waves.

Sadie and I return in doors, silent as Zac hops up the stairs back to bed, happy. We look at each other, no words to deal with the utter logic of a small child.

I think, I did not notice the constant noise that drowned out lives; the airplane trails that blotted out the sky and the stars, I thought of the striving to fill our days with mindless tasks, with rushing about and now I consider that these things are missed but savour each day that they are gone.