

The Plainly Dressed Man

by Richard Rewell

The plainly dressed man stood at his kitchen doorway and looked towards the end of his lawned garden, seeing between two apple trees, the sun kissing the flat horizon of the marsh, its tall reeds waving in a light, chilly evening breeze. Night was on its way.

“What good news,” said the plainly dressed man’s wife as she extracted a freshly cooked pie from her oven.

“Yes, it is,” said the man.

“Go and write your acceptance then,” said the wife, “the pie needs to cool.”

“If you wish.”

The man walked across the kitchen’s worn terracotta floor tiles and out into the unadorned passageway to his study where he sat at an ancient oak table, and readied himself to write his letter, enjoying the sound of the fire as it spat, crackled and burnt enthusiastically.

The man was joined by a large grey scruffy haired dog who sat, then laid in front of the fire where it began to doze.

The room was void of pictures and ornaments, but a chipped porcelain jug sat upon the table accompanied by a crudely made clay mug, into which the man poured water from the porcelain jug.

“What do you think Ben?” said the man watching his dog.

The scruffy, grey haired dog opened one eye and wagged his tail.

“Should I take the job? I’ve craved it for years. I will start at the top. I will rid this country of that huffing, puffing fancy haired buffoon. He doesn’t understand ordinary people. He and his clique are privileged landed gentry.”

Ben yawned and gave only a brief wag of his tail this time.

“He’s an immoral sop, fornicating and drinking just like the rest of the privately educated classes. They all need to be brought into line. They have no heart. No soul. Its money, money, money. And they influence the good people of our land as they flout their wealth and excesses. Time, for a change.”

“Supper’s ready,” shouted the wife and Ben propelled himself out of the room heading for the kitchen leaving the man to stare into the glowing fire, wondering what Europe would think of his proposals. They might be difficult. Especially the French.

“Hurry up it’s on the table,” screamed the man’s wife.

The man sat at the head of the kitchen table and said grace, his wife sat at the far end while their eight children were distributed evenly along the sides. Ben sat at youngest child’s ankles, and who surreptitiously began to feed him morsal by morsal.

“I’ve been thinking,” said the man’s wife, “you really should have a title if you’re going to take that job. Nothing ostentatious. I can’t abide this showy vanity that abounds within the current political and regal establishment.”

“I agree. They are like strutting peacocks,” said the man, “what title did you think of?”

“How about, Lord Protector.”

“Oh, I do like that Elizabeth. Now they are going to see who I am.”

“Good,” said Elizabeth, “Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector, it is then.”