

The Night Was

A timed exercise by Lou Beckerman

The night was one she'd like to forget. God knows why it keeps reappearing – either in a dream or in odd distracted moments. She dreads it. I mean, feeling foolish for one night is bad enough, but when the hideous laughable fool she made of herself comes back and back to haunt her time and time again – it's too much for anyone.

'Now I suppose you want me to tell you what happened. You do don't you. Even after what I've just said. You little bastards. Do you have no respect for my sensitivities?'

'I suppose if I don't tell you now there'll never be an end to it. So let's get it over and done with. But God – honestly!... Is it hot in here? – or is it just me...'

She removes her thick Fairisle cardigan but remains lobster red.

And we three all just sit silently spellbound. As far as I recall not one of us dives in to rescue her from the discomfort. We are mesmerized. Perhaps she'll get up and leave any moment, and then we'll never know what happened that curious fateful night.

'Well... if I have to' How she hated their complete indifference to her humiliation. In that moment she felt a deep loathing for them.

'Idiots! Ignorant idiots.'

She starts again - only she's stuttering now – poor cow.

'The n n night was' Only what was the night...she couldn't remember. It was dark yes – but was it cold? Rainy?

What was she supposed to tell them...

'Oh to hell with it!' she was no good at this. They had the better of her.

We continue to just watch her. Is she melting? The red skin is leaking. She looks wet through – dripping – and with scarlet blotches appearing over her face and neck.

'Damn you. Damn you. Damn you.'

We are spellbound. She's the best yet. All previous baby-sitters were boring compared to her. And now look at her twitch. What fun. But we still need our bedtime story – otherwise we'll tell - though they'll only cart in a monotonous stand-in if she goes.

How she hated children. How they always seemed to get the better of her. Shredded was how she felt. That's it – shredded... OK...

Now she's talking funny ... starting to scare us.

'Get to bed or you'll be shredded

Sliced and minced and then beheaded'