

Grant Brecham

The dotor wes yit daurk. The threttie holieday makkers keikin intil the chaumer cuid sei bot the bed an the outline o the winnok, fur the wan licht sepin throu the hingers wes gey peillie-wallie an waik. Bot thai wesna fasht fur thai wes lipper wi guid-wull. Thai wes on the daffin. Ivverie etioun unner the sin wes repraisentit, sattelt on a lang cartie wi binks, mountit on rails. The hale jing-bang wes slyped alang glibbie at fyve ells ti the bew win bi lektra-magnetik pouer frae houss ti houss, sae thai cuid vizzie ilk ruim throu a gless waw. Bi a ferlie o sciens the gless derved the audiscence frae vyow ben the houss. Housomdevir, the waffs an souns o the houss cuid be eith detekkit throu the keikin waw, furby the temper. This houss wes gey cauld an airish. Eftir a wie the scouriss cuid sei thair braith an suin thai wes aw fuffin out clouds o oam an lauchin wi pleisur at this nyow gemm.

The gyder wes a ying, blak man. He set at ane en o the machine ti mak siccar at aw wes duin correk an ti the roubles. He didna jyne i the outstrapaluss cairrie-ons o the scouriss. I fak he hed a gey dour an dowie aspek, an semed ti be mair concairned wi'z ain thochts. Preined ontill'z uinifurm wes a wie plaisteik cairt wi'z nem on't. Upower the nem wes the teitil "Meintrie o Designaitions" an ablow wes wrutten "John Grunstane", aw duin i testfu gowd scrip.

Puir John wesna awfie blyth i hiz wirk. Ilkday he hed ti conduik a hantil o fowk roun the Bakwattir Distriks an mak siccar at thai hed a guid an sauf

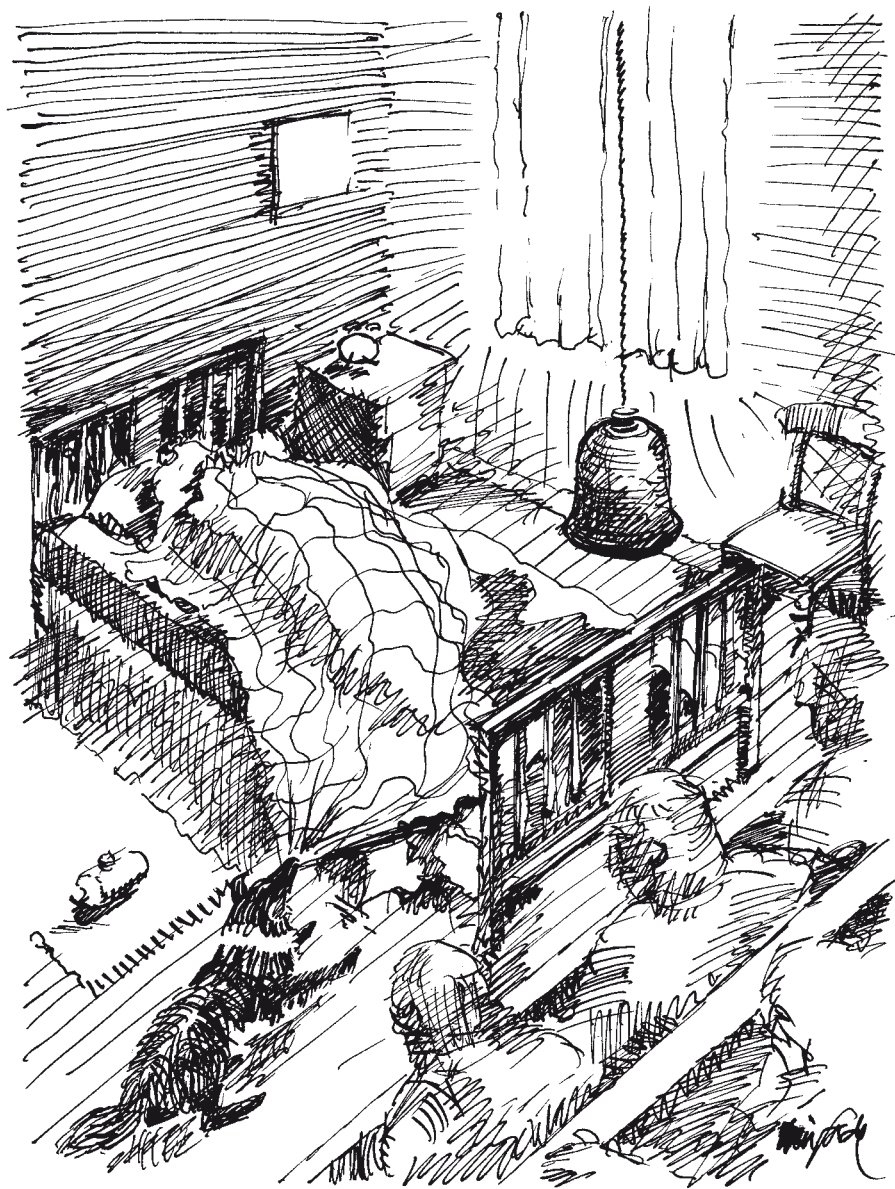
holieday priein the harsk an roch weys o the auld farrant fowk at yit folloed i the auld hecht-howe. Fur hiz herd wes aw ceitezans o the Uinytit Nautiouns an wes o the generautioun at hed nae kennin o hungir, cauld, dreid or puirtith an hed ti wun thair knowlege frae the wie pukkil o fowk at did.

O a suddent, the rysin sin beikit throu atwene the courtains at tyldit the winnok. The scouriss wes dungit down intil seilence i a blenk as the licht descrieved the plenishins o the chaumer fur the first tyme. The graithins wes sempil an fyow. The afoirmentonat hingers wes cuivert wi a paitren o a wie Dutch lass weirin a curch on hir heid an a lang roun kirtil wi a brat, an a laddie wi plus-fowers, an a bunnet an clugs. Furby thare wes a win miln. Ower the bed wes a mukkil counter-pene steikit i lappet-wirk. The duir, syde-buird an waird-gaird wes aw pentit widd an gey hameart. The waw fornent the vizziers hed a keikin gless hingin i its mid. Bot it didna kyth the phizzes o threttie gawpin ceitezans. Bi the skeil o the ordinateir an the uiss o holograms, nae mair nor an auld gauss fyre wi a kest-ern brace wes reflekkit. Thare wes a thriesum o stoukie deuks fliein up the waw ower abuin't an a wie nok fur guid meisur.

The threttie guid fowk wes slabbin up thai parteiklarities whan wiout warnishin, a stane pigg cum shuitin out frae ablow the bed claes an fawed ti the flair wi siccan a loud an depe baff as wuid hae unhoulet the saul o the Halie Gaist hissell. Wioutten excep, the scouriss lap frae thair sates wi the fleg. Ane, twa skreighed an haussed thair neipours, a whein gied out a sweirie wurd, an ae auld carl lat aff sicna onodorative foust at naebuddie wuid sit asyde'm fur the lave o the scour.

Whan the gyder explened whit hed happent, thai aw leuch an luikit a whein sham-faced. Bot a nyow ferlie arise afoir thair verra ei, fur the dunt o the pigg hed waukent a bawsent collie dug at bene courriet down i the neuk o the chaumer. Ti the scouriss this wes a bauld an orra beass at nane o'm hed met wi afoir. Fur aw thair eddicautioun an infurmautioun technologie thai hed nae knowlege o siccan a leal frein as a tousie tyke.

The collie dug gied itsell a bit shak an stachert ower til the bed. It upheized the bed cuivers an progged the sleper wi its weit, blak neb an than out harlt its snout. Frae the beild o the counter-pene folloed a whyt meg decorat



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wi fernietikkils an a theik o rid hair. The haun guddilt about ontil it fun the dugs heid, grippit it an gied its lugs a guid roch rummil an rug. The scouriss wes aw hauden thair braith, ti sei whit wuid transpyre.

The dug tho, kent the gemm o auld an, gurrin an shawin its tetht, it grippit the bed claes an begoud ti tirl thaim aff o the bed. Bot the haun wes as gleg an claucht the cledin wi a steive gresp. It bak-ruggit agin the collie. Lik the oliphant bairn on the braes o the Limpopo, the dug went down on its hunkers an poued an harled an rugged ontil aw the claes wes worriet aff o the bed an a mukkil rid theikit man wes kythit, weirin a punk an whyt strippit pajama shuit an haudin on ti ae coign o the chakkert challend fur grim daith.

The tyke wes nou wirriein hiz en o the counter-pene aw ower the flair, sae the man hirselt hiz shanks ower the syde o the bed, up-sat an pit ae fit down on the plettit cloutie bass. Slawlie the vizziers raelyst at he hed bot ae fit an the ither wes tint. He fun the mat fell cauld an mochie-lik. He kinkit hes taes an raxt out fur hiz widden fit an baffies. Bot the dug wes ower slie an, drappin the counter-pene, chakket hiz tetht ontil ane o the bauchils an run aff ti'ts layer wi'd.

The sicht o this mukkil, shocklie man hautin an henkin ower the cauld lyno on ae bauchil fur the gain-zeld o its marra wes sae unco risibil at the scouriss wes aw greitin saut tears wi lauchter, duntin thair neipours wi thair neives an rowin about. Eftir bakwunnin hiz fit-geir, the subjek o thair mirrienes on-tied hiz fause fit an tuik a wrapper frae a heuk an on-harlt it. Bot the collie wesna feinist. He nippit the cuit ban o the pajamas an poued down the puir man's breiks. The veizziers wes nou lowdent ti a slaiverin, shakkin mound o uimaunitie. Ye cuid o bun thaim wi strae. John Grunstane wes stane faced tho.

Wiout plaint, the man stappit out o hiz baffies an breiks an wun ower ti the winnok whaur he apent the hingers. I a saicont the fremmit waatchers wes aw quaet an gantin ower a nyow ferlie, fur the gless penes o the chess wes aw cuivvert wi the feinichin flouers an rannocho o Jokkie Nip-Neb, glisterin an skinklin wi the lemes o sinlicht. I the warl o the veisitars siccan a sicht nivver bene sein.

“A no can tete out throu thon,” says the man ti the collie an upliftit the chess ti sei whitlik gemms the elemental pouers bene pleyin outby. The dug up-stuid on hiz hinner-shanks ti skair the vyow an snowkit at the cauld sowff o air at snoult i the winnok an roun hiz maisters hurdies.

The vyowin drift cuid sei ower hiz shouther an outby intil the gairden. It wes a daimen, brumaill sicht nivver kythit ti the liks o thaim afoir. A laich sin wes lounin throu the gull an lichtenin a jeillit an weirdlik whyt warl. Ivverie brainch, ryce an foilzie wes cranreuched ower wi kirstal frost fedders. The sin gliskied aff ilk plaunt lik it wes graithed wi sperks. The gress o the grene, the graivel o the peths an ilka crum o muild wes ower-rymed an bejowlt. The man gied a grue.

“That’s eneuch o that,” says Grant Brecham ti hissell an steikit the winnok wi a dad.

Follaed bi threttie pair o ein, Grant nou birlled roun an breingied athort the chaumer straucht til the keikin waw. He wes a mukkil strang cheil an a curn o the scouriss wes insensed intil thinkin at aw wes discuivert an thai maun flie fur thair lyfes. Bot it wes the cauld at wes gaudin’m. He grippit a box o Bluebells frae the brace an skartit a match intil a douzie. Beildin it i hiz haun, he cawed a bress spikket an luntit the auld farrant gauss fyre wi a loud plop. The snell reik o the spunk an the unco smell o the gauss tuik the keikers mynds aff o thair fley richt awaw.

Grant nou raxed hiz airms abuin’z heid an gied a gryte gant, whyles he waarmed hiz dowp at the fyre. Then he wheiched the pajama breiks an the baffies up frae the flair an flang thaim ontill the bed whaur the dug cuidna wun hiz mull t’m. The dug kent the gemm wes ower an waggit hiz tail, pit hiz heid agin hiz maister’s thie ti wun a clap an a dawt. Thon flumgummerie ower Grant Brecham went ben the ruim an cuid be hard diddlin t’issell whyles the doukin-wattir wes rinnin.

The michtie lektra-magnetik convoyer bummed intil actioun an wiout the slichtest adue hirselt alang ten fit. Fur the passingers wes fidgin fain ti get a keik at the neist spectacular sight at thai howpit wuid be shawm ti’m. Thai wuidna be begunkit, fur the ruim at rowed up afoir thaim wes the keichen an this wes the den o the kenspekkil an notour Mistres Stein. At first

sicht it wesna the hame o siccan a gyre-carlin o rane an sang. The michtie cheinie jawbox an bowie stuid cheke fur chow owerby the winnok wi chromium plettit crans an a claes wringir atwene thaim, fittit ti a yetlin up-staun wi twa crampets grippin't i plece. Thare wes a galvaneised claes byler an a blak japanned cuiker wi a whyt inemilled duir ti the oen. Roun the waws, at wes aw pentit a testfu aippil grene, wes skelfs wi pats an pans on thaim an caups an jouns hingin frae heuks alang the foir-aige. I the mids o the ruim wes a taibil wi a rid an whyt chakkit brat ower-stent the tap o'd. The flair wes layed wi lyno paitterned ti brade o parquet. Aw the graith wes i guid rele bot hed the hingin luggit luik o a dug at kensna whan the neist sklaff'l faw.