

Black Dogs (Flash)

by Jo Thomas - Sunday, November 05, 2017

<http://journeymouse.net/wp/?p=4637>

“It wasn’t Churchill that came up with calling depression the Black Dog, you know,” the concierge says. “It was Samuel Johnson and he was from nearby, from Lichfield.”

I picture a thickset, barking Staffie. I still feel upset that anyone could associate black dogs and depression. I suspect dogs are more likely to suffer depression than dole it out.

The concierge continues, “I like to think he was inspired by the idea of Padfoot. It’s like the Staffordshire version of – what’s it called? – Black Shuck?”

I say nothing.

“One of those that warns of death, anyway,” the concierge finishes.

When I don’t respond as expected, when I don’t respond at all, the concierge shuts up and hands over my room key, tight lipped.

“I’m not interested in the supernatural,” I say in a lame attempt to make us both feel better.

It’s the concierge’s turn to stay silent.

—

I’m awake.

I can’t move.

I hear padded footsteps. Pawsteps?

I smell wet dog.

The padding steps near the bed.

I feel cold breath against my arm.

I can’t move my arm out of the way. Which is a shame because no-one ever likes a cold, wet nose against bare skin.

If I could speak, I would tell the mutt to shove off. But I can’t and the bed creaks and flexes under the extra weight.

—
Eventually, I sleep again.

Eventually, I wake again.

The dog is gone. The tubes and wires and beeps that keep me alive are not.

I would complain about my visitor to the nurse when she comes by but I still can't speak and I still can't move.

—
The hotel room has only slightly more character than the hospital room. Just like the hospital room, I struggle to remember why I'm there.

—
I'm awake.

I can't move.

I hear those padding steps approach the door of my room.

I smell wet dog.

The padding steps near the bed.

I feel cold breath against my arm.

"You're limping," I say. "Did you get hurt chasing cars again?"

The black dog sighs against my bare arm.

"Fine. You can sleep on the bed," I say.

The bed creaks and flexes under the extra weight.

—
Eventually, I sleep again.

Eventually, I wake again.

The dog is gone. So are the tubes and wires and beeps that used to keep me alive.

I won't complain to the concierge about my visitor.

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