

Keith did not enjoy flying at the best of times, but today's flight home had been particularly awful. For the first hour, a child had been kicking the back of his airplane seat and throwing a chimpanzee teddy over the seats. He was not entertained. He had made several attempts to have his seat moved, but the air hostess had refused. The lady to his left reminded him of a meerkat, craning her neck to peer over the height of the seats, and gossiping to her husband about what might be going on between various passengers. The person in the seat beside him tried to initiate conversation—questioning him continually like a bad chat show host. Eventually, Keith put his headphones on and pretended to watch the in-flight movie, despite the fact he had already seen it in the cinema. Keith left the plane as quickly as he could, picked up his suitcase from the conveyor belt and headed straight for the taxi rank.

Keith shuts the front door behind himself and drops his briefcase beside the lamp-stand. He switches on the bathroom light, steps inside and turns the tap to begin filling the empty bathtub. His head has been pounding since he landed, only to be made worse by tripping on a loose pavement slab outside the apartment building.

Although potentially more dangerous, the only injury he had sustained was a grazed knee. Lying there, he stared at the blades of grass, tyres of parked cars and a cigarette packet that someone had dropped. He decided that he had finally had enough.

Keith worked as a data processor at a local data management company, examining log printouts with a magnifying glass and typing the errors into a computer for forty hours a week. He saw himself as no more than a puppet in the system—keeping every appearance of a contented worker—but passionately hating every moment. He would not go back there—that was the only thought that made him feel anyway better.

Stepping into the kitchen, Keith sees his cat scratching against the window knowing this is the time it is usually fed. Ignoring it, he picks up a wine glass sitting beside the sink, knocking several dirty plates which have been piled there since they were used. A pea rolls from the plate where it was sitting and falls into the sink where it bobs gently like a buoy. The ripples it creates travel slowly towards the edge of the sink. He pulls a bottle of red wine from underneath the counter, pours himself a large glass, and sits the bottle on the table by itself.

Lying back in the bath, he closes his eyes and tries to remember what it feels like to be happy. Memories of a previous life float through his mind; his first date with his wife at the local bowling alley... an argument with the printer about their wedding invitations... a crayon lying on the floor... the family's pet spinning its hamster wheel... His life was destroyed when they were both taken from him. It had never and could never be the same.

Stepping out of the bath, he pulls the plug and watches as the bathwater swirls and gurgles out of the tub.

Keith dries himself with a towel as he enters his bedroom. He roots in his desk drawer searching for his dictaphone. He sits it on the desk and opens the door to his wardrobe. He turns over a garbage can sitting near the desk, and stands on it to reach the shelf at the back of the wardrobe. With his body fully extended, his fingers lay hold of it: the case of his double-barrel shotgun which he uses to hunt deer in the summer. He climbs down and sits on the bed in silence.

The first click is that of the dictaphone. A short mumbled message of regret follows it—his closing thoughts before he would die.

Keith removes the false teeth from his mouth and replaces them with the end of the gun. He runs his fingers down the length of the shotgun and fits his thumb over the trigger.

He will no longer be trapped.

The window shakes as he discharges the gun. Outside the cat leaves its perch on the windowsill, jumping onto the porch and walking in the darkness of the back yard.