**Dancing on the Lawn**

**Subjective Narration: Single Character**

**By Colin Foulkes**

It was a few weeks ago, now, the kind of spring morning that makes you want to throw all the windows open. I was just finishing folding the laundry, so it must’ve been a Tuesday, when the doorbell rang, twice.

‘Hold on, I’m coming,’ I yelled, as it’s a bit of hike from the laundry room to the front door. I passed through the living room, straightening my dress and checking my hair on the way; you never know. The bell rang again, longer this time, insistent.

‘Hi Joan,’ said Mary, as I opened the door, ‘have you seen him? The weird guy at number twenty seven, have you seen what he’s up to?’ She’s a bit flighty at the best of times, is Mary, and it appeared that the day was falling a touch short of the best of times.

“Haven’t a clue what you’re talking about Mary dear, why, should I have seen him? Come in and have a cup of tea, I was just going to …’ She grabbed my arm, pulled me through the front door out onto the step.

‘Look!’ She said and pointed across the street and down a few houses; ‘He’s been at it for over an hour now.’ And then I saw him, the ‘weird’ guy, dragging a sofa across his front lawn. He set down the end he was holding, the whole thing facing the street and stepped back a pace or two and inspected it for a few moments, then stepped back and moved one end forward a few inches.

‘I guess the Feng Shui was a bit off,’ I said.

‘Yes, the Chi seemed a little unbalanced to me,’ she replied, suppressing a giggle. Evening classes at the local school, together we’ve enjoyed a broad spectrum of low-intensity further education, time wonderfully wasted. He then walked over to the garage and came back carrying a pair of seat cushions; he slapped the dust off with his hand and put them in place. Then, job finished, he sat down, dug out a cigarette, lit it and leaned back, as if he were relaxing in his living room. Releasing a long stream of smoke, he looked up, gazed around, and spotted Mary and me. He raised his hand and smiled, he may have mouthed a word or two but I can’t be sure. I could hear faint music from somewhere, his garage I suppose, but it was too soft to make out; big band music perhaps, maybe jazz, but not that messy, squeaky kind; this had a tune you could hum.

‘OK then, cup of tea.’ This time I grabbed Mary and pulled her inside.

‘You should have seen it, Joan,’ she said, blowing on her tea, ‘he was struggling for ages getting that thing out of his house, he took the door off, and he must’ve taken the feet off the sofa, because he was putting them back on when I walked over. I wouldn’t have thought you could do that on your own. He must be crazy. Why’d he do such a thing? Crazy.’

When Mary left the man had gone, but the sofa remained, and had been joined by a television on a low table, and a set of drawers.

‘Extreme spring cleaning do you think, Mary?’ I asked.

‘Installation art maybe?’ she said; art appreciation classes, Monday evenings last fall. ‘Well, he’d better hope it doesn’t rain,’ she said, and we both looked up, not a cloud in sight. Then with a slight wave, she walked off down the street, gazing all the time at the strange spectacle.

I didn’t see him again until later that evening, but every time I passed a front window I’d take another look, I mean, how can you not? Each time there was something new.

By the time I was ready to close the windows, there was a regular showroom out there. A desk cluttered with stuff; a bed set up on its frame, with headboard and side tables with lamps; a kitchen table with a hideous tablecloth, held in place by a potted plant; and boxes, there must’ve been a dozen of the things lining the driveway. Mary was right, it was crazy.

And it was when I got up to close the curtains and turn on a few lights that I noticed a young couple stepping out of a truck on his driveway. They wandered around the front yard, touching items, sliding fingers across their surfaces, trying the couch, the bed. The boy switched one of the bedside lights on and off, then walked over to the kitchen table and did the same with a blender. He then sat on the couch and switched on the television, casting the scene in a faint blue glow. She lay on the bed and called the boy over, well I should say young man I suppose, and they both lay there, and cuddled for a short time.

It was then I spotted the owner, walking up the street, with a grocery-bag swinging from one hand. He greeted the couple, chatted for a while and then poured drinks from a bottle he took out of the bag he’d been carrying, and glasses he took out of one of the boxes. The girl seemed to do most of the talking, every so often pointing at one or other of the items of furniture, while the boy seemed to be writing something, maybe a cheque.

Then the man got up, put a record on the record player, and started playing that old music again, the next thing I knew the boy and girl were dancing, right there on the grass. She looked so comfortable moving to the rhythm but his awkwardness was obvious and soon he stopped, and sat down again. The girl moved over to the man, offered her hand, pulled him to his feet and the two started dancing, slow and easy and comfortable; she held him close and he closed his eyes and smiled.

It was crazy.