

Lapses in Memory

Jane suddenly found herself sitting at a desk in a dull room. She was still dazed from the flashing lights and could only remember fragments of the last 2 hours. She looked at the desk and realized it was hers: on the desk was her stained coffee mug, pictures of her loving husband and daughter, and the bland welcome message that greeted her every day, *Welcome, Jane*.

A whoosh of compressed air escaped the door down the hall. Jane turned to face the door. Abel pushed the door open with his little chihuahua in his arms and gave a slight wave. *Right*, Jane realized, *I teleported to work*.

It seemed almost like magic - teleporters were finally here and had transformed the entire world: from the stars to the bazaars. The experience was surreal: one could enter the quiet, metallic machine and after a flash of red, one could be anywhere, regardless of the distance. No one quite knew how the teleporters worked, just that the experience was ephemerally unpleasant.

Jane looked over at her daughter's picture - frozen in time in that happy moment - and then at her pocket mirror. She remarked on the overuse of her mascara. Paula, her neighbour, couldn't control her dog from barking last night and it completely ruined Jane's schedule. No matter how many times Jane approached Paula, she always seemed to deny the racket her dog made each night.

I'll have to do something about that dog.

She continued working, hoping not to anger her manager, Theseus. Right before turning to leave, Theseus called Jane to his office with a steeled, disappointed look on his face.

Look at all the mistakes you've made - fix these before the end of the day.

After apologizing profusely, Jane went back to her desk while consoling herself that this wouldn't happen again. *If only that dog would let me sleep, I wouldn't be so tired at work!*

After correcting her mistakes, Jane made her way toward the teleporter room, still a little apprehensive about the experience. The machine lit up and proceeded to scan her. After what seemed like an eternity, the machine finally bathed her in a soft white light.

George, her husband, had just finished reading their daughter a bedtime story. Exhausted, he flopped onto his bed, snoring. Jane grabbed a sandwich from the kitchen before turning on the Holo-News.

Only 0.001% of Talon Teleporter users experience side effects! It's a very successful product launch.

While not completely reassured, Jane went to bed more worried about how she'd focus at work tomorrow. Then, just as she started to enter the deeper stages of restful sleep, she heard that unpleasant bark.

For the next few mornings, a tired and irritated Jane got ready for work. She might stub her toe one day or bruise her elbow another and she always ended up late. Jane's patience and temperament worsened each day until she finally decided to have a frank conversation with Paula.

Paula was fumbling with her lock when Jane arrived, her dog yipping and yapping at anyone in the hall.

"Paula, you need to control your dog," Jane began, "It keeps barking at night."

"Excuse me!" Paula's squeaky voice joined her dog's yips before disappearing into her unit, "I don't like your tone!"

Jane stepped into her flat and took her shoes off. She slumped down on the couch and turned on the Holo News.

A bark came through the wall. Jane scowled. *The wretched dog began its orchestra early tonight.*

And the cycle continued for another week: Jane would complain and yet her slumber would be ruined. Jane's hair became dishevelled, her nails irregular, her eyes baggy, her clothes stained and unkempt. More importantly, she was sleeping at work. Theseus not only noted this but sent a disciplinary message to Jane suggesting she fix her behaviour or risk losing the job.

Jane realized she had no choice but to confront Paula again. This time, however, Paula was unapologetic. Jane's voice rose to match her desperation and Paula reciprocated.

“This dog simply can not live here!”

Their argument had gotten so heated, so intense that glass would have shattered. She would have continued if she hadn't heard a loud thud coming from her apartment. Jane rushed to find the source of the sound. Jane was shocked to see her daughter on the ground clutching her ears. *What happened?! It's too loud!* Jane consoled her daughter with trembling hands. She could neither contain her anger nor properly console her fragile daughter. She felt her throat suffocate, having already run out of tears. The feeling was unbearable! Later that night, she stepped out and approached Paula's unit.

The dull lights above each room cast harsh shadows against the rest of the hall. Jane stepped towards Paula's room, her thoughts interrupted by the dog's bark. Her room was as dark as obsidian and just as impenetrable. Every step required conscious effort. Jane knew Paula couldn't see the opening of her door so she kept pushing it steadily. Jane slipped into the room and the door shut softly behind her. Jane silently crept towards the whimpering dog, the cold blade heavy in her hands.

Inside the dog's cage was an automatic feeder. *Of course, Paula's too lazy to care for the dog.* She slowly unfastened the cage, being incredibly careful not to wake the dog, lest she set it on its nightly routine. She knelt down until she felt fur and a heartbeat. It was fast and lively. She brought the knife closer to the dog's throat and in a single motion, slit its throat. A smile crept upon her face, but she wasn't satisfied. She repeatedly stabbed it, her anger venting in all its various forms. Her motions eventually became clean and precise. Finally, she wrapped the mangled corpse in a plastic bag and took it to the incendiary station.

That night, she slept more soundly than she had had for weeks.

The next morning, a rested Jane woke up. She got out of bed and slipped on her favourite slippers. She walked into the hallway and briskly walked past Paula's open room. She caught a glimpse of blue and knew that the police had to be there asking questions.

Officers also showed up at her work, calling various employees for private discussions. Jane kept her eyes lowered when walking past them and generally avoided them. Finally, they pointed toward her and called a few other policemen. Jane panicked - *had they found out?*

Jane adjusted her feet in her shoes. She got up and arduously made her way to the washroom. She thought about camping in the washroom until the policemen were gone but her thoughts were interrupted by a short knock. She scrambled to make an excuse: *I'm still busy.*

Maam, we need to talk to you. She could hear the decisiveness in his voice, how certain he was in his duty. *They already knew they're just toying with me now!* She adjusted her face and gingerly unlocked the door. Her heart beat out of her chest.

The same police officer who first pointed at her stood at the doorway and opened his mouth to speak, but Jane cut him off.

IT WAS ME! IT WAS ME! I KILLED THE DOG!

The police officer's expression shifted for a second, but he regained his composure. He slowly grabbed handcuffs from his back pocket and cuffed Jane. He led her across the office and into the long hallway where she had always come to work. The police officer pressed his wrist against the door's portal, and Jane vanished.

As she finally lay her head down on the bare metal frame, she heard that frenzied familiar bark one more time.