



The Final Process

A Short Story

By

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The Final Process

It was just after 5am when he was awakened by the phone.

"The phone's ringing..."

"Yes, so it is. It's for you. Nobody I know would call me at this time in the morning!"

"So, you want me to get it?" he asked.

"I'm not moving," she replied.

He cursed as he put his feet down on the floor, then ran down the stairs and grabbed the receiver.

"Hello?"

"Is that Gordon?" she asked.

"Yes..."

"This is the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. The file has a note saying to call you if your father's condition deteriorated. I think if you want to see him one last time it might be a good idea to come soon. We don't think he has very long."

"Okay, thanks, I'm on my way!"

He knew the road well enough; this wasn't the first time he had undertaken this drive, but the thought was more daunting than it had ever been before. He knew that it would take time and he wanted to be magically transported to the hospital reception instantly.

The fastest time he had ever completed the journey was two hours and forty minutes, and it was always about the traffic. It was still early and he would miss the rush hour in Aberdeen, then it would be around seven when he passed through Dundee. The traffic would be starting to build up...

The car seemed to sense his state of urgency as he cursed at every speed camera. 70mph seemed like walking pace every time he slowed down to avoid the dreaded flash. He marvelled at the wonder of his GPS system as it beeped above the volume of the rock music every time a camera was imminent, then he dropped a gear and accelerated away again.

The traffic queues began on the south side of Dundee and he picked up his mobile phone then dialled.

"Auntie Jean?" he asked.

"Yes... Gordon?"

"I'm on my way to the hospital. They called me to let me know that Dad's not looking too good. Do you want me to pick you up so that you can come with me?"

"Yes, please dear, that would be nice," she replied.

"Okay, if all goes well, I should be at your door at around eight o'clock. Please be ready and we'll go."

"I will!" she said as she hung up.

The approach to the Forth Road Bridge was a simply a long queue of cars and trucks. There was no detour or any way of navigating around the line of traffic, it was simply a matter of sitting and waiting for it to move. The time dragged by and he could think about nothing else except how long his father was supposed to live, waiting for him to arrive.

He pulled up outside Jean's house at 8.45am and left the engine running, then strode towards the front door and rang the bell. He waited. She's putting her coat on, he thought.

The door opened and she stood and looked at him, holding a cup of tea and wearing a dressing gown.

“Good morning! Are you ready?” he asked quickly.

“I’m not going, I’ve decided,” she answered.

“You mean I just drove all the way across the city in rush-hour traffic to come and collect you, and now you’ve decided that you don’t want to go? Why didn’t you call me?”

“Oh, I didn’t think...”

“There’s a surprise! You never think!”

“You sound just like your father!” she replied accusingly.

“Stupid old woman!”

He hurried away down the path and back to car, then took off back towards the city centre.

He knew that parking beside the hospital was almost impossible, so he looked for a space as near as he thought he could get to it and parked the car, then walked.

He reported to reception and was told to go up to the third floor and ask for the Staff Nurse. He sighed and knew that much of his day would be frustrating, he would have to wait for other people, wait in any queues that had formed before his arrival and simply take the day in his stride, step by step. He remembered how much he hated hospitals and the visits he had made to his father while he was alive. He laughed at the memory as he climbed the stairs.

“Did you bring me any cigarettes?” he had asked.

“Of course not, Dad! This is a hospital! You can’t smoke in here!”

“Well whisky then? Did you bring me any whisky?” he had demanded.

“No Pop, you’re not allowed whisky! You know that! You’re on medication and you’re not allowed alcohol!”

“Some son you are! The simplest things and you can’t even do that!” he had raged.

“I brought you some fruit, that’s all you’re allowed.”

“Fruit! Huh! I can’t even eat fruit! They’ve taken my teeth in case I bite the nurse again!”

He had tried not to laugh and then failed miserably.

“Why on earth would you want to bite the nurse for God’s sake? She looks after you! She cares for you and you bite her?”

“She’s a stupid cow! They’re trying to starve me to death in here you know! It’s a conspiracy! That fucking Paki doctor’s trying to kill me and he’s got all the nurses on his side now! Tell Bob to get in here tomorrow and bring his gun! I’ll kill them all before they can get me, then I’ll escape! Tell him to bring the Humber!”

“Dad, the Doctor’s an Indian gentleman for a start, and he’s not trying to kill you! There’s no conspiracy here, they’re trying to look after you and all the nurses are great. They all care about you and they want you to get well. Uncle Bob’s not had the Humber for over twenty years and he doesn’t have a gun either. Calm down, relax and take it easy. Have you watched any films?”

“Films? Same shite as always! I’ve seen them all! Another thing! They’ve stopped letting Jean in to see me, I know they’ve been sending her away!”

“No Dad, she stopped coming. You said some very rude things to her the last time and she refuses to come back. What did you say to her? She was very upset...”

“She’s in on it too, the conspiracy! The nurses have turned her against me! She’s a traitor and a spy!” he had declared.

“Dad, Auntie Jean’s your sister and she loves you, but for the life of me I can’t figure out why. You’re a nut job and these drugs have made you worse. Now calm down and take it easy. Can I get you a cup of tea?”

“Tea? That’s not proper tea! They put drugs in it!” he had declared. “So? When are you bringing my boy to see me? I would like to see him again before I die. Bring him in here to speak to his old Grandpa!”

"Dad, he's seven years old. He's a little boy and he doesn't understand what's happening. You know he loves you very much and he's always talking about the time we went to Braemar together to the Highland Games. He said you told him you were going to be competing this year, in tossing the caber and the piping. He sends his love and can't wait for you to get better."

"I won't get better you idiot! I'm dying! They're killing me, I told you already! Are you fucking stupid or something?"

"Yeah Dad, that's right. I'm fucking stupid. Stupid to come here to see you! It's a hundred and fifty miles to drive and I do it every week just to come here and get cursed at. No wonder Jean doesn't come, and she's only half an hour away by bus."

"Just go then! Fuck off and don't come back!"

"I know you don't mean that, it's the drugs..."

"I do mean it! Fuck off!" he had yelled.

"Staff nurse please?" he asked at the ward window.

"Yes sir, just a moment..."

"Gordon! Good morning... I'm so sorry, we had hoped you could have been here, he asked for you just before he passed," said Staff Nurse Shirley.

"When was that?" asked Gordon.

"Let's see, yes, time... yes, 8.49am..."

"God damn that stupid old woman!" he cried.

"Sorry?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, it's just... oh, never mind, just one of life's little idiosyncrasies..."

"I'm so sorry for your loss, just a moment and I'll take you downstairs."

"Thanks Shirley, I don't want to put you to any trouble, I know how busy you are," he replied.

"No problem, we all loved the old bugger you know. Quite a handful towards the end as you know, but that was really just because of the morphine. He was a lovely man, all the girls used to chat him up and he loved it. We'll miss him," declared Shirley.

"I doubt that, but thanks, it was a kind thought," he answered.

She reappeared a few moments later then led him back along the corridor to the lift. She pressed the button and looked at him sorrowfully.

"How's your mother?" she asked.

"Sore point," he replied.

"He always talked about her. He loved her very much," she explained.

"Yeah..."

"I'm sorry, listen, if there's anything I can do, please..."

"Thanks Shirley, you've been wonderful, if I could get the death certificate, I need to..."

"Yes, of course, We'll get that sorted next. You do want to see him, don't you?" she asked.

"I guess so. I haven't done this before, so I'm just going along with it all."

"Ahh, I see. Okay then, it can be quite upsetting, you don't have to if you don't want to, it's not a rule or anything, it's entirely your decision."

"Understand. Yes, I'll say goodbye..."

"Good. I think it's the best way. It gives you closure; you know? Are you his only son?"

"I have a brother, younger," said Gordon.

"I don't think he's ever been here," replied Shirley.

"He hasn't. He didn't get on with the old man at all and it was mutual. My father never really liked my brother, even since when he was a baby, and my brother screamed blue murder if the old boy even went near his pram. No love lost there, I'm afraid."

Shirley laughed. "Somehow I can't imagine that!"

"It's true, I promise you," Gordon answered, smiling at her.

"How's the little guy?" she asked.

"He's fine. I wanted to bring him the last time I was here but his mother gets all protective. It's life, but she wants to wrap him up in cotton wool, so..."

"Funeral?"

"None of my family are attending, there's just me and Auntie Jean," he explained.

"Ahh yes, Jean. There's a strange fish," Shirley mused.

"Yes Ma'am, no arguments on that score, damn stupid old woman!" he replied and they both laughed.

"Here we are..."

She opened the door and the mortuary attendant directed her towards a door with his arm, and then sat down again.

"Through here..." she instructed as she opened another door.

There was a table in front of them and the body was covered with a sheet. He strode up to it and pulled the sheet back and looked at him.

"Goodbye for now Pops, I hope they have golf courses in heaven and I'm glad all your pain is over. Save a place for me, will you? I know you're up there already, so if I go down the way, ask them to pull me up, will you? I miss you already and I love you and I'll pick the hymns you like... goodbye Dad..."

He flipped the sheet back over his father's face as Shirley watched him and smiled.

"Good words. He was so proud of you," she said.

"He was a far better man than I'll ever be. He had morals that he lived by, his ethics were beyond question or doubt. He was respected by everyone and he had a hard life. He was one of the Victorians, you know, children should be seen and not heard! He was strict in his way, but he was always kind and compassionate."

"Was he in the war?" asked Shirley.

"Yes, he lied about his age to join the RAF. He served in South East Asia, Burma, horrible conditions, malaria, all kinds of terrible things. He had a kidney removed when I was twelve, that was part of it too. He went with Jean's husband when he joined up, they were great friends. My uncle was much older than him and he always looked after the old man, through the war and before and after. It broke the old man's heart when he died..."

"Come on love, let's go and get a cup of tea," Shirley suggested, "the death certificate should be ready soon. The administration here always takes a wee bit of time."

She led him from the cafeteria to the main office, then approached one of the staff quietly, almost whispering, then returned.

"Here we go, it's official now," said Shirley sadly as she handed him the document.

"Thanks, I guess that's it then?"

"You still have to go and get his belongings, you know, his personal effects?"

"Where?" asked Gordon.

"It's along the corridor there..." she replied, pointing in the general direction.

"I don't know what to say, I'm sorry. Thank you, Shirley, all of you, for looking after him and for me too, I don't know how you girls do it," declared Gordon.

"You get used to it love, it's a job and in time you start to become immune to the less attractive aspects of it," she replied pensively.

"No, nurses are born, not made, I believe you have to have this special quality in your heart, you either have it or you don't. You give so much, thanks for everything."

"You're welcome, come and see us any time," she replied as she threw her arms around him and kissed his cheek.

"Goodbye Staff Nurse Shirley, I'll never forget you..."

She turned on her heels and marched away quickly, back to her ward and her duties. He watched as she disappeared and marvelled at the way she was. How did these girls do it?

He knew he would never understand.

He looked at the woman as she sat behind her desk, and he waited. She didn't look up at him or respond in any way, she just sat with her eyes glazed over, staring into space.

"Ah-hem!" he coughed falsely.

"Yes?"

"I've come to collect the personal effects of my father..."

"You have ID?"

"No, I go around all the hospitals in Edinburgh stealing the trinkets off dead people."

"I see... is it lucrative?" she asked.

"Sometimes. I find that rich old ladies who wore their diamonds on their death beds are the best. Sometimes you get the odd nice ring, or even a valuable bracelet..."

"Name?" she asked.

"What's the name of the nice old rich lady that just popped her clogs?"

She scowled and then stood up and faced him.

"I mean what's your name?"

"Henderson, my father was Bill, sorry, William..."

"Do you have any ID?" she repeated.

"No, I left in a bit of a hurry this morning... credit card?"

"A credit card is not a means of identification!"

"Okay then, what about the death certificate? I have that..."

"That won't work either. Driving licence, passport?" she asked.

"Not something I tend to carry around with me. Imagine if I lost either? Disaster! Wait a minute... What if Staff Nurse Shirley could tell you who I am? Would that work?"

She scowled at him again and then picked up the phone.

"Yes, hello Staff, it's Felicity from Property. There's a man here who claims he's the next of kin... yes, Henderson. Tall, thinks he's a comedian... brown leather jacket... okay, yes... What's your aunt's name?" she asked.

"Jean, Jean Ramsay, why? Is she here?" asked Gordon.

"That's fine, yes Staff, thank you," she said as she replaced the phone.

"Do you know what your name means?" asked Gordon.

"What?"

"Felicity! It means happiness. Did you know?"

"Of course!" she replied arrogantly.

"So... what happened? Ahhh! I get it! Your father named you because he was happy when you were born! Misunderstanding! It's not you who's happy, it was him!"

"Just sign here!" she replied angrily as she put the form down in front of him, then laid a plastic zip-lock bag beside it. Gordon looked at the contents; his father's watch, his wedding ring, his false teeth and some bank notes and change. Gordon signed the form and she snatched it from him.

"You can go now!" she said angrily.

"Oh, that's a shame, just as I was having so much fun..."

"Go or I'll call security!"

"Goodbye happiness, hello loneliness, I think I'm gonna cry..." he retorted sarcastically.

"Buddy Holly?" she asked.

"Very good!" answered Gordon as he picked up the plastic bag and walked away.

The conversation was strained and he looked deep inside himself to try to determine a way that the subject that could be discussed rationally, or how he could manage to reverse her decision. He immediately realised that it couldn't be done as he looked at her with a strange preconception, almost as if he was at a loss, and as he looked into her eyes, he couldn't even identify her.

He couldn't grasp why she had chosen to abandon him, in his grief, at a time when he thought he really needed her the most, probably more than he ever had, at least since he was a child.

"You can do this," she said in an effort at reassurance, and he knew that she didn't believe it herself. She had spoken the words as an attempt at encouragement, but she had failed miserably. Even the tone of her own voice betrayed her, in almost the same way that she was about to disappoint him again.

"First you need to get the death certificate," she stated.

"I've got that already and I know the process, please don't repeat it again. You explained it to me and I understand," he replied.

"Why are you so angry?" she asked, defensively.

"I'm not angry," he answered.

"Would you like some breakfast? I can make you something..."

"No thanks, I'm not hungry," he declared.

"When was the last time you ate a proper meal?" she questioned.

"Lunch yesterday, I had a sandwich, but that doesn't matter, I'm okay."

"You should eat something..."

"I will, later, please stop going on at me," he said as he got up and turned to leave.

"When will you come back?" she asked.

"I don't know, is there really any reason for me to come back here?"

"I'm your mother!" she exclaimed.

"Yeah, my point, exactly. I know that your support in this was just too much to ask for," he answered. "I just don't get it. You were married to him for twenty-five years, you told him you wanted a divorce the night before my wedding, now you won't even go to his funeral? My brother won't show up, you know that, but what about your brother and his family, will they be there?"

"Yes, he said they were going," she replied.

"How marvellous! And then, afterwards?" he asked sarcastically.

"His sister has arranged to have everyone over to her house, so the wake will be there..."

"Great! Jean's house? Well, that's just terrific! Wake? It won't be a wake, it'll be cups of tea and egg sandwiches, there won't even be any alcohol, besides, you know who will show up," he retorted.

"That's not my problem," she answered coldly.

"No, it's not, you're right, because you won't be involved at all! How could you do this?"

"I've made my decision!" she exclaimed.

"I still don't get it! He's dead! He won't know if you're there or not, so what difference does it make? Do you honestly think that he would care? He wouldn't expect you to show up anyway after everything that's happened, but at least you could be there for me! I'll be standing there on my own, with nobody beside me and everyone will be whispering and muttering about how sad it all is..."

"So selfish! Everything has to be about you!" she replied angrily.

"My own wife won't even go with me and I'm not taking the kids. You could have offered to look after them so that she could come with me!"

"She doesn't want to go either, exactly the same as me!"

"Thanks Mum, I won't forget this," he said, "and in return, you can forget about ever seeing your grandchildren again. I'm done with you! You call me selfish? Don't call, don't ever speak to me again!"

He turned away angrily and walked out of the house, totally bereft of any emotion towards her. He knew what he had to accomplish now, so he resigned himself to the day that lay ahead. He looked up at the overcast blue sky as the cold morning air attacked him, making him shiver.

"Why did you have to die Dad? Why?" he asked the heavens, "I miss you..."

"Right! The process! Follow it and get it done!" he told himself as he started the car engine.

The streets were busier now and people were intent on whatever it was they were doing in their lives, hustling in shop queues, pushing themselves onto buses or just hurrying down the street. He was oblivious to most of it, there had to be good reasons for all the haste, but none of it touched him as he walked towards the Registry Office.

He imagined that he was in a bubble, nobody could see him but he could still see everyone else. Time didn't matter, only the space around him which was under constant threat of invasion by people who seemed intent on crashing into him. He dodged them, twisting and turning or side-stepping them, as he crossed over the side streets off the main road at a steady pace.

He wondered why government offices always looked so imposing. He examined the building at length, then sighed and shook his head as he marched in through the outer doors to be confronted by that smell. How could you define it? What was it similar to?

The answer was nothing, it was unique. It was simply the way that these places always smelled. It was an office, but not like the DHSS or the Post Office, it was much more official than that. He laughed as he looked at the sign on the wall.

Births, Marriages and Deaths.

"This must be the place then..." he mused. "It should just say *Life* really, they could save on words at the signwriter's. You're born, you get married, then you die. Game over.

Here we go, wait in the queue... Oh! Take a stupid ticket from the machine and get a number... "52. Hmmm, the LED sign says 37... great..."

Gordon sat down to wait and watched a woman officer stand up at her desk. She looked very serious and he wondered if she liked her job. Her fair hair was pinned up on top of her head and she was wearing a white blouse with a grey skirt. He tried to guess her age, then gave up. He thought that it was her shape that had captured his eyes then decided it was true. His mind had already gone blank as he daydreamed, trying not to think about the funeral as he surveyed her curves, her slender waist and her long shapely legs.

"Deaths?" cried the woman. "Any deaths?"

"I'm still alive," he retorted, "but my dad died. Does that count?"

"Over here," she answered indignantly.

He got up and wondered at the way the queuing system worked. Number 37 goes to 52 inside twenty seconds? Maybe someone should have been pressing buttons? Isn't technology wonderful, he asked himself as he strolled towards her desk.

"Death certificate?" she demanded.

Gordon took it out of his inside jacket pocket and handed it to her.

"He died today?" she asked.

"This morning," Gordon answered, barely managing to avoid what would have been his obvious sarcastic reply. The death certificate states time, date and place of death, so why would she feel the need to ask? Oh yes, she's a civil servant, she's lonely, she doesn't get much opportunity to exercise her vocal cords, and she doesn't get out much.

He sat and watched as she typed on her computer then pressed "enter".

"Thank you," she said.

"What for?" he asked, wondering if she was actually a mind-reader and she was thanking him for not being sarcastic or rude to her.

"Next!" she cried as she handed him a pamphlet.

"How to cope with loss?" he asked. "Are you serious? I mean, this is the answer? This little brochure gives you complete instructions and insight into coping with the loss of a loved one? Really? I always thought that death was pretty fucking final and there were no answers, but obviously the government must be right."

"Sorry?" she asked.

He dropped the pamphlet onto her desk then turned and walked away.

The smell of fresh coffee automatically turned him in through the door of the little café and he sat down at a table by the window. There was nothing like it and he gladly replaced the stale office air in his lungs with the aroma of Arabica roast and that fresh-baked smell that always inhabited these places.

A pretty girl in a black apron smiled at him as she approached.

"Coffee please, large black, and a croissant," he asked quietly.

"We're still doing breakfasts for another ten minutes if you'd like sir," she offered.

"Coffee's fine thanks," he replied.

"Yes sir."

He looked around and noticed the décor of the place and immediately smiled.

This was a place where students came, it was obvious. Wi-Fi Zone, password, various artwork for sale on the walls, posters for lost causes and forthcoming events, old treadle sewing machine tables converted for café use, and the owner behind the bar, wearing thick horn-rimmed glasses and sporting a fashionable goatee beard. The music was jazz, Coltrane, of course, and it seemed to make the place come alive. Gordon thought it was a comfortable place, easy, designed to be so and probably quite successful. The prices for coffee, cake and sandwiches didn't seem too high, so this guy obviously knew his clientele and was certainly aware of the fact that students never had any money.

It came as a welcomed half-hour long distraction from the day's drudgery and with two tasks completed, there was only one remaining; the undertakers.

As he walked back to the car, he thought about which one he should use. There were so many to choose from; confusion clouded his mind. There was one on the street corner of most of the suburbs but was one better than the other? Was it a question of price or service? He pondered it for the duration of his stroll and as he unlocked the car, he decided to keep it local. His father had been born and brought up in the Morningside area of the city, so the decision was made. He made an illegal U-turn at the road junction, then headed back towards Tollcross.

"Good afternoon sir, I was just about to close the doors for lunch," stated the woman, looking at her watch.

"Oh, okay then, what time do you open again?" asked Gordon politely.

"One-thirty sir," she replied.

"Right then, I'll see you later then... or not."

"Sorry sir... what do you mean?"

"Well, I just had breakfast so I don't need lunch right now, therefore, that would leave me here in Morningside for an hour and a half with nowhere to go and nothing to do. I could drive to Leith and by the time I got there, I'm sure I could find one that's open, or I could simply Google it on my phone and then make a few calls until I find one that's open. I'm sorry, it doesn't really make any difference to me which company of funeral directors gets my business, I just want to get this over with so that I can find a bar. You understand?"

"Yes sir, please come in," she said.

"Okay, thanks. I'll make this as easy as I can for you. You ask me what you need to know and I'll give you the answers. We should be done in fifteen minutes."

"Very well sir, please take a seat..."

"Your relationship with the deceased?"

"Father."

"Will the funeral be in a church or crematorium?"

"Crematorium."

"Mortonhall?"

"Yes please."

"Location right now?"

"The Infirmary."

"Contact?"

"Staff Nurse Shirley."

"Full name?"

"Lovely Shirley, third floor."

"Religion?"

"Church of Scotland."

"Do you have your own preference of minister?"

"Christian please."

She laughed quietly, then apologised.

"Don't worry, it's okay. No, I don't have one any more. I think he died some years ago. Probably in the hot place by now, the bastard..."

She laughed again and Gordon smiled at her. If it had been possible, he would have liked to adopt her as his mother, and he smiled again at the thought. She was already someone's mother and he wondered if she had a daughter.

"We will contact someone and arrange all that for you sir, as soon as we have a date and time at the Crematorium, it's usually three or four days. Would you prefer a specific date?"

"Soonest."

"Hymns?"

"Psalm 23, to the tune of Crimond, it was his favourite, he always sang the harmony part."

"One more?"

"Onward Christian Soldiers, hymn 535 I think..."

"Open or closed casket?"

"Closed."

"That should be fine sir, now all that remains is for you to choose a coffin. Do you have any preferences?"

"My father liked a nice bit of wood, so something with a nice grain on it."

"There are many to choose from sir, here's our catalogue. The ones marked with a red dot are out of stock at the moment so any of the others will fit the bill nicely if you're in a hurry. Most people choose based solely on price."

"I like this one. I know this may sound strange, but are all these made from solid wood, or are they just veneered?"

"Most are veneer, solid wood is very expensive..."

"Yeah, I get that. So, this one here is fifteen hundred pounds more than this one and they're both veneer?"

"Yes sir."

"Fine, I think he'd prefer this one any way. It looks like rosewood."

"Good choice sir, handles?"

"Nothing too garish. Simple, these ones..."

"Lining?"

"Closed casket? Whatever you usually provide, but not the News of the World or The Sun." She burst into laughter then composed herself and tried to speak.

"No apology is necessary," he declared.

"How would you like to pay sir?"

"Visa," he replied as he pulled out his wallet.

"Obituary?"

"Yes, both papers, no flowers please. Charitable contributions should be made to the Royal

Infirmery, thanks to the staff on the third floor, you know..."

"Yes sir, I understand, we will word it accordingly and I'll be in touch as soon as I know the details for you. If you could fill in this form, everything will be taken care of for you."

"Thanks very much, you saved me a trip to Leith."

She laughed again as he looked at the form and began to complete it.

Gordon handed the form back to her then stood up and looked at his watch.

"Twelve minutes. Your soup will still be hot," he pondered.

She laughed again as she got up and shook his hand.

"That has to be the fastest order I've ever taken. We get all sorts you know, from sobs and sniffles to full-on wailing. It's really been a pleasure sir."

"Thank you, it was good for me too, but the earth didn't move."

She burst out laughing and Gordon smiled wryly back at her.

"Call me anytime," he said as he turned and walked away.

"Thank you, sir, enjoy your beer!" she called after him.

"Oh, I will! Goodbye Elizabeth," he replied as he turned and looked back at her and smiled.

"It's Betty!"

"Of course it is!"

Gordon felt a sense of relief that he had completed his tasks and he wondered about the very serious business of finding the right bar to drink beer in, until he couldn't. He immediately knew where he was going and turned the car around to head back up Morningside Road towards Tollcross. He would be able to park in a side street somewhere and he considered the taste of the ale as he sat at the traffic lights, waiting for them to change.

As he pulled away, a van travelling in the opposite direction at speed ran through the red light then rammed into the side of his car.

He caught sight of it at the moment of impact and his vision turned to black.

"Son? Come with me son," said his father.

"Dad? What...?"

"Don't worry son, everything will be fine. Come with me, walk into the light..."

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