

### **A Moment in Silence by Antony Tabaniag**

The soft creaking of floorboards filled the room, contested only by the subtle ticking of a grandfather clock nestled in the corner. It was a cramped space, not even large enough to determine where the kitchen ends and bedroom begins, nor where the bedroom gave way to the living room. Despite this, it was comfortable. It was home.

The creaking boards continued their duet with the clock. The sound comforting the man as he prepared to leave his cozy little home for the day. His hand already upon the door to leave, he paused for a moment before clearing his throat with a gentle cough.

“I’ll be back soon, I just need to run a few errands today.”

His words were for no one in particular and yet the clock in the corner chimed as if in response. Grinning at the coincidence, the man opened the door and left his cozy little home. The hours passed and the afternoon sun began to fade, its feeble light slipping through half shut blinds. Long shadows danced between the haphazard stacks of the man’s possessions strewn about the room creating little webs of inky darkness. Stoically, the grand old clock ticked on, punctuating every second of the shadow’s silent dance. Abruptly the door swung inward as the man returned home, entirely oblivious to the performance he had interrupted.

“Ah... home at last.”

Had anyone been around to hear his words it would have been difficult to distinguish them from a mere sigh. A rush of activity followed as he made himself comfortable in his home once again and settled down into bed. He knew not how long he had slept, nor even when he finally awoke. His home was exactly as he had remembered. Yet he could not shake the feeling that something was not quite right.

Had it always been this dusty in his home? Had he left the window open and allowed the wind to knock something over? Was he still dreaming?

Surely it must have always been this way. How could things have changed overnight?

“Ridiculous. I must just be seeing things.” He grumbled as he shuffled to the sink to wash the sleep from his eyes. Freezing cold water brought him to his senses. He turned to examine the room once again, determined to find the source of this feeling. His gaze poured over the tiny space over and over again. A thin beam of light from the window caught his eye, its radiance a stark contrast to the rest of the gloomy unlit room.

The floorboards creaked again as he made his way to the window, their protest filling the room with sound. As he raised the blinds, light began to flood the room. It’s relentless pursuit confining the shadows to the corners of the space. He took no notice of the freshly illuminated space for his attention was fixed on the scene before him.

“How... H-how?! That’s just impossible!”

Before him lay the street with which he was so familiar. The very road he had walked down just yesterday under the summer sun was covered in a shimmering sheet of snow. Looking closely he noticed that it wasn’t even freshly fallen from some freak weather incident. Dozens of trails wound themselves

up and down the snowbank dotted sidewalks. He stood motionless in the silence staring at the impossible scene before him.

A sharp pain shot through his leg as he repeatedly pinched himself. Disbelief turned to terror as he realized that this was no dream. Recoiling he stumbled backwards, tripping over the haphazard piles strewn about the floor before crashing unceremoniously back onto his bed.

All words failed him as he sat in silence contemplating the absurd reality outside his window. The moment dragged. Eventually he reasoned that what he saw was simply a fluke and even if it wasn't, at least his comfortable little home was still as he remembered it and that was all that mattered. Chuffed by the thought, his composure began to return as he sat in the silence.

Silence?

His eyes flicked to the old clock and waited for the familiar tick. As the moments passed in stubborn silence he resigned himself to investigate. Still a tad perturbed by the weather, he was cautious as he approached. The face looked more worn than he remembered, quite a lot more than should be possible. The porcelain face was not just dirtier than he remembered, it had begun to crack and yellow. The gleaming brass hands now sat frozen, tarnished and dulled as if years had passed since they last chased the passing minutes.

"Is this some kind of sick joke?! It cannot be real! Everything was normal... yesterday... everything was fine as it was..." He wailed as he fell to his knees, but as soon as they left his lips he knew. For years his routine had been the same, nothing changed and he began to relish the comfort that had brought him. Yet now that comfort had evaporated, in its place was nothing more than hollow dread.

Time had simply slipped him by.

## **Artistic Statement**

Change can be scary, it can be uncomfortable. When something changes, whatever preceded it has come to an end and people are not always ready for things to end. Instead some will choose to just stay in their comfort zone for as long as possible and pretend that nothing around them is changing. But that's simply not how things work, with or without us change is inevitable. In social innovation and systems thinking we are taught that systems can fall into rigidity traps, where they become immobile and are exceedingly difficult to change. While I certainly wouldn't describe this as an uplifting story, my hope is that someone somewhere will resonate with this and not allow time to pass them by as well.