



The Bench
Pete Anstice

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A short, pointless story...

Or is it?

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Why I'd want to claim ownership is beyond me, but I will.

Dedicated to nobody.

Thank YOU

Chapter 1

The old man sat on the bench alone. Rain was cascading down upon him but he was sure he had known harder, wetter rain, yesterday. It hadn't beaten him then and he was sure it was not going to do so now.

The second old man saw the first, sat alone on the bench alone, getting more and more rain sodden and went and sat next to him. He sat without invitation and without any comment or acknowledgment.

The dark sky was darkening more with each passing minute. That was the way of the world, especially as the day came closer to ending. One more worthless day almost over and another one soon to arrive.

"When is he due?" one of the old men, it does not matter which, said to the other.

The other didn't answer at first. He was tired of the same old question each and every evening. But he knew he had to answer and he had to give **THE** answer. So, eventually, in a world weary voice he responded "About half an hour ago."

The other man nodded with as much interest as he could muster. "Was he on time?"

"No, he was early."

"So you missed him?"

Yes he had missed him, again, as he did everyday, as he had to everyday as he did not want to everyday. One day he would love to arrive early and meet him. "Tomorrow I might arrive early, hide around the corner, just to see if he looks like they say he does."

The other man turned and, for the first time today, looked at the gnarled and unwizened face of his bench sharer and gave a little laugh, almost to himself, but just enough for the other old man to hear. "You say that everyday."

It was true, he did say that everyday, but only because he had to. He thought to himself that for once, just this once, he should punch his companion in the face but, as expected, his inner thoughts reminded him that he had that same thought everyday and never did strike his companion.

"I will not say it tomorrow."

"You always say that."

The grimace on his face would have been seen if anyone had been looking but, like every, seemingly, infinite previous day, no one was.

"So why?"

Why what? Both men thought but only the second man answered "Why what?"

"Why do we end up here, everyday, in the rain and think and say the same thing?"

Here we go again the second thought to himself, again. "You know why, because it has to be, because we sinned."

"We didn't."

"No but **WE** did."

That was true and they both knew it. The sin was sinned and the die was cast. And now the two of them sat on this bench, in this rain, in this repetitive existence and all because of that one day.

"He didn't have to do that thing though, did he." It was true, he didn't, but he had. He did not know the consequences and, if he had, he could not have changed the past. He said it would never happen again, and this was true, it hadn't because it couldn't.

"Today is different" said one of the two men. Again it is not important which.

The other looked at him with a look of surprise on his face. "What do you mean, different?" No answer, no movement, no rain. The rain had stopped, had it done that before? Then one of the two men, the one whom it does not matter which one it is, but it does to him, took a gun from his pocket and hurriedly put the end of the barrel into his mouth. Angled at forty five degrees upwards, the gun was fired and sent the old man over the back of the bench and into a heap of dying flesh on the rain sodden grass.

The other old man stood up impassively and walked around to where the soon to be dead other old man was bleeding and disfigured. He looked down and with no emotion in his voice said "Same time tomorrow?"

The dying man gurgled "Of course." and then died, again.

Chapter 2

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