

Sufficient

by Angela Kubinec

At 10:30, she lets the dog in for the night. There is a raggy quilt on the bed that she cannot surrender, and as she slides beneath it, she becomes herself for the first time all day. She has a rolling table, like the ones you see in hospitals, for her laptop. Propped up on pillows, with the whirring and ticking of the ceiling fan, she feels the invisible humming of the lights pull close around her. She is pretending to be a writer.

Suddenly, another equally quiet person is there, having entered their chat using a long-remembered secret code. She used to think of him as someone to entertain with charming lies, but things evolve in unexpected ways. They exchange trinkets in the mail. She recently purchased a headset, and will soon hear his voice.

Television, like the tinkling of a cat's bell, helps them to gauge their level of privacy. As it ends, spouses drift away to sleep somewhere else, relievedly. Quiet and privacy are necessary, of course, but they do not promise anything for her.

It is easy to be misunderstood late at night, tired and anxious for an unexpected sound. Tonight she has typed the wrong thing, which she does more often than she used to. As is his habit, like a virtual Socrates, he will allow her to reflect quietly on what that error was. Only when she explains herself sufficiently, will the special silent twinkle of his upcoming words resume.

