

Diane Wald

the corgis of queen elizabeth

on wednesday september 10th 2003 i was visiting my friend larry
who is chronically ill
larry knows everything about the corgis
and queen elizabeth
who now has five or six corgis
who mill about her feet and the feet of her dressmakers
and all the kings and queens before elizabeth
and he knows what the corgis have for breakfast
and he knows that they get fresh vegetables not raw
and they get turkey
in little silver bowls
cut up in little cubes not slices
and queen elizabeth serves them their meals herself
she had a favorite corgi named daisy
whom she buried somewhere on the palace grounds
with a little corgi funeral
and i do not mean to make fun of that
because i am happy she loved her corgi
but let's be clear it does not always mean
that a person who loves a different kind of creature
is totally good
as i understand hitler loved canaries
and not to compare her to hitler
but queen elizabeth also indulges in hunting
and we all know about those presidential dogs

while larry is talking i'm thinking this is very fascinating
but i'm also watching the digital clock
over his shoulder
which displays hours minutes weather wind velocity
and alerts you whenever the airport closes in boston

if there are disasters of any kind
this is a very special clock
that he bought with part of the money that he received
from his suit against the massachusetts bay transit authority
occasioned by a trolley driver closing the door of the trolley
on his already painful foot
as part of his affliction is a dreadful neuropathy
to which he rarely refers
although that trolley incident really pissed him off
because the driver could have easily seen his crutches

he tells me the corgis have their own bedroom
next to the bedroom of queen elizabeth and prince philip
yes the queen does sleep with the prince even now
except on the nights when he's out very late
and comes home after she has retired
when politely he goes and sleeps on a special princely bed
right in his dressing room
the corgis however always sleep in their own room
just next to the queen's own queenly bedroom
and recently when a man
was somehow able to break into the palace
and walk boldly into the queen's suite of rooms
finding the queen cloaked and crowned in terrycloth
as she had just taken her queenly evening bath
and was carrying her gin tray and a big yellow towel
the queen was most relieved that the corgis were not able
to get out of their bedroom
because she feared that they would have used
their little diamond-sharp teeth
to shred the silly man like turkey
so loyal and so fierce (but so sweet) are those corgis

and while larry is telling me about the queen and the corgis
and throwing in a lot of extra information about prince charles
and camilla and how camilla and her father
actually have suites of rooms in one of the royal buildings

where diana's sons now live
i cannot understand how this can be true
but larry swears it is
in any case all this amazing information pours out of larry
in a way that i never would have believed possible
since he is normally a rather circumspect fellow
and while i'm watching the airport clock
over his right shoulder
i'm watching over his left shoulder
his tiny television
which for some unknown reason he has set to show captions
for the hard of hearing
they are showing newly released tapes from al qaeda
showing pictures of osama bin laden
or someone made up to look like osama bin laden
walking up and down the hillsides
somewhere
looking a lot like a shepherd
from the old testament
and underneath the captions are reading
"is it osama?
is it not osama?"
there is an investigation to try to find out
whether the tape is real or a hoax
and whether the soundtrack (or what shows on larry's tv
as italicized captions) was added to the tape after the video
was shot and i'm thinking
what difference does that make
it doesn't mean that it isn't really osama
or even that it isn't really
a shepherd from the old testament

and perhaps it's all happening in cleveland or barcelona or honolulu
and not in afghanistan or iraq or hollywood
or any of the places we're always being conditioned to think
are the only places anything of significance ever happens
when really everything is happening right here

right here with the corgis and queen elizabeth and larry
and the trolley driver and the lawyer who handled larry's case
and the democratic presidential candidates
and the people who are sitting out on their stoops
just the way people did fifty years ago
on washington street in jamaica plain
but it's right here and not twenty years ago or five years from now and

everything's happening right here
right here where you hear or read this and make up your mind
about it
right here and right now and not anywhere else forever

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