

Notes – A Study in Boredom

There are words, but they just float aimless through the air. You hear them, but you don't *hear* them. They become like the teacher in Charlie Brown – meaningless, mumbling noise.

You look around, because you can't possibly be the only one. You're right – you're not. In fact, everyone looks just as you feel. Eyes trained obediently on the PowerPoint screen but not seeing it, not really. They are just keeping up appearances.

The more you look, the more the people around you come alive. Across the table, Jean from Accounting lets her eyes drift innocuously down into her lap. You're pretty sure she's texting her new boyfriend. The new proposal writer, Alan, is staring at the ceiling, his lips moving silently. You smirk. You've counted the water spots in this room, too.

The woman next to you – you've never bothered to learn her name – hasn't moved at all in 10 minutes. Her eyes are glazed over.

You start to be hyper-aware of your body. The desk chair is stiff and awful. Your back is cramping and your butt hurts. Your legs are restless, like on those medication commercials. No matter what position you shift to, something feels off. Too often, one or both of your feet falls asleep. You really should see your doctor about that. And the muscle in your shoulder that won't stop hurting. Maybe you should get a massage.

Oh God, they're still talking. Now even your boss is doodling on a legal pad. You can just barely see what he's drawing: a row of neat flowers across the bottom of the page, petals in even sixes just like an elementary student.

The conference room windows are covered with heavy black drapes. They say it's because of glare on the projector screen, but you suspect it's to keep you from staring out the

window and daydreaming. There's warm bright light peaking around the drape edges. You close your eyes for a second, imagining being outside and free.

The rustling of paper breaks through the mumbles. Then it grows to a roar. It's all you hear. You feel the urge to run your fingers along the pages in your own notebook, to join the rasping symphony.

At least they've provided coffee. You get up quietly, unintrusively, to refill your mug. The pot is right next to the door.

No one is paying attention. Do you dare to do it? Normally you would never, but it's just too much. When you put your hand on the door handle, you feel some life flow back into it. The door is well-cared for. It doesn't creak.

You push it open. Take a step. Take another. By the time you reach the stairs, you're running. The door at the bottom leads to the outside. You push it open.

The sun is shining.