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THAT BLACK BALLOON

Emily W. Recchia

It was a sad and withered-looking thing, that black balloon. Small and morose, it would hover wistfully over the chimneys and clock towers and all things London, only to realize that it was not wanted and went off in search of a new nirvana. Sometimes it would peek into children's nurseries at night, and sigh (*I was never a child*), scattering paper dolls gently across the room—a melancholy wind.

The rocking horses never cared much for it; its string had been caught in their tails one too many times. A tail is a tail is a tail. And aren't strings tails? It shouldn't have made a difference, but it did. Rocking horses can be stubborn.

Oftentimes the nurseries were not enough, and so the black balloon would continue to wander, wander through the sewers and the zoo and the stairwells. Its surface, once sleek and proud, had begun to gather mold. Grease. Wrinkles. *Is this the beginning or the end?*

Nine o'clock came around quickly those days, and the streetlights would come on, but the balloon left no shadow. Perhaps it was a shadow already. Perhaps its blackness came from the core and there was no light left in it to cast one.

A photographer saw it crawling down the street one day. He chuckled at the sorry sight, took a picture, and went on his way. *Do I really look that odd?*

The picture was developed that same day. The black balloon came out red.