



Allan Guthrie's 'Bye Bye, Baby' - a novella worth revisiting

A clever, dark novella featuring Detective Frank Collins

BYE BYE BABY

Bruce. Knowing his name, knowing lots of facts isn't enough. Or is it? Facts. Turniquets to the mind, tightening, loosening, solving nothing. Souvenirs of what probably was. People keep up appearances, right? A child is missing. Beyond Bruce, twists are timed like clockworks. Go admire the calmness of their function. That's all. Or is it?

If only a Blackhall boy would make his way back to this, with his name like a tuning fork: Bruce.

If only a lost son would make his way back to Blackhall, and watch shadows fall away from his mum like a snake's dead skin.

Round thoughts, sadness: mum Clare, all messed up. Calls him baby. Doubles love where sense ends. Bluffs with her eyes: empty, forlorn windows. There's CID staff with no rights in this matter. With no rights in no matter in a world not right. Mindhooks, factscrews strip the case. Detective Constables struggle with cold calculation.

Scooping facts empty isn't enough. How they are at each other's throats! A difficult thing, human nature. A difficult thing, being 'good people', being a cop, being part of the clockwork. Police careers, numb nothing. Failed. Filed.

Edinburgh vaults. Mrs Wilson weeps. Her boyfriend - whose blood doesn't clot, or does it? - the moment twists link facts in the chain. Clare's split, a mum's shadow before it is time. Serious today, not smiling tomorrow. How she sucks pain out of secrets! How she asks: are you the police? Eyes. Tears, too, work their way back to the beginning.

If only a missing kid would make his way back to Blackhall. Clare can't tell those goners she's sorry. How many graves? And no packed lunch for the Blackhall boy, that kid missing, camera shy to a fault. Untold bedtime stories pace off sense where doubled love ends. Oh, it's just booze on Clare's breath, really!

That car always to remember, a crash, a mind torn open like a parcel. Since then, its insides burn. Memory beams from beyond, dry ice in abundance, hissing no. Are you the police? Missing pieces of truth, tossed to troubled DCs. Hushed clocks, sense, calendars: madness hunts at all heels over at Mrs Wilson's, right there in her blood red sitting room. Link it to black.

Separation surrounds all characters here. That, and secrets. Holly, Erica. Holy crap. The time, the words since then. They are still just that: stuck. Women struggling with relationships, chimney souls, visible. Dark owl flight owners. Sisters, forever to be found among the unnumberable.

Knowing lots of facts is a lingering fever. Are you the police, DC Collins? Are you, Frank Collins, too truthful, too normal, too vulnerable? Every crumbled fact measures its time. DC Collins blinks against the Wilson case, falling on his face like snow. His uncle, larger, smaller, really fully ripened: the mainspring, the terror of kept promises. Are you the police? Are you on duty, Frank Collins. Are you in pain.

*****Highly recommended

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