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A Four O'clock AM Shot
by Georg Aeberhard

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A Four AM Shot

I hear a shot. I wake up. I don't open my eyes yet. I am waiting for a while. No more shots. I open up my eyes slightly, just to catch the time: 4:19 AM. I turn around, closing my eyes. Still no more shots. Shall I call the police I heard a shot? But I don't know where the shot was fired. My one room apartment has windows southward into an old town street, on the other side, northward, into a tree alley where cars park. I try to remember. Yes, the shot created an echo, it must have been fired in the old town street. One shot? Was it cold blooded murder? A mafia style execution? Or was it a suicide shot? Let's forget about calling the police. What will I tell them? Come quickly I heard a shot? I wonder what they would tell me.

While attempting to fall asleep again, I begin to evaluate the possibilities of a suicide. I live in Switzerland, every adult of age and active in the military militia service has his automatic and 6 shots to go with it at home. Lately, we had some suicides among the higher business echelons, managers, even prominent CEOs. But these kind of people do not live around here.

Who are my neighbors? I go thorough them one by one. An old couple, it's said quite ailing with cancer, they also say they manage fine though. There are two single men, older ones, around sixty. One is quite a difficult one, jobless, joyless, has overcome cancer. I think "No", he likes himself too much. The second one, working part time, chain smoker, the corners of his mouth hanging down grimly, yet he is friendly when you run into him. Maybe. There are three women living here by themselves, two divorced, one too freaky to get married in the first place. Women do not shoot themselves, not usually. Then there are two young couples. The rumor is, they argue frequently; and some students, boys and girls. No. Am I forgetting someone? Myself? There are certainly more people in the neighborhood but I don't know them personally.

So, was it a murder? Unknown one? One I won't ever find out about?... I don't call the police. The church bell rings twice for half past four in the morning and shortly afterwards I must have fallen asleep again. Still no more shots.

PS Having my afternoon four o'clock coffee at the bookstore here, one block away from the apartment building where I live, I asked Lukrezia, the senior vendor there, if she might have heard something about a "shot". She laughed out loud, and said: "Yes, we had an alarm here at four in the morning. Our hot water boiler exploded." I said: "At nineteen past four?" "Yes", she said, "exactly!" Well, now. But I have forgotten to ask her how many books got soaked wet, or even tablets?