

Finalist, Fiction

The Tuesday Man

By Irving Greenfield

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Every Tuesday Martin Sanger went to the Veterans Administration Hospital on Twenty Third Street in Manhattan to attend the Group Psychology Meeting; and on alternate Tuesdays met with Dr. Eicks, his psychoanalyst. But on this particular Tuesday he was a free man; there weren't any meeting. The group leader, Dr Teamen declared a holiday and Dr. Eicks was on vacation.

He could do whatever he wanted to do: visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art, or the Morgan or the Frick, which was his favorite because it was more negotiable than the others. He enjoyed looking at paintings, not that he was an artist. He couldn't, as the expression goes "Draw a straight line." Or, instead of going to a museum, he could walk the streets of the city, something he enjoyed doing despite the fact that he had to walk with a cane.

But - - there almost always is a but there was Lilly, his wife to think about. Since her accident that left her a semi-invalid they were each other's prisoner. Circumstances forced him to become "chief cook and bottle washer," and caretaker, roles he did not enjoy. He could not move about the way he did because she could barely walk. The words "for better or worse" took on a new meaning for him. He resented the restriction placed on him. He felt as if he was all tied up, and, to tell the truth he was. He was living two lives, or at least one and half-lives and it wasn't easy.

When the day came, he could leave the house early in the morning as he always did, and head up-town, have breakfast somewhere and for lunch find restaurant where he could dawdle away a couple of hours. He'd choose one that had an ambience that radiated quality and softness. And at corner table he'd sit and think about - - No, that would push him deeper into the funk he already was in.

Yes, he could leave with telling Lilly that he would not be going to the VA that day, that day was his day. He deserved it. The change would do him good. After all, the only think he did do, was clean the apartment. To do that, Maria came every two week. By that time the apartment needed to be scrubbed down.

Martin shook his head. Suddenly he felt like a thief. If he did what he wanted to do, he would be stealing that day from Lilly. He couldn't do that. He would tell her what kind of day it was; then, later in the afternoon, they would slowly walk to a bench overlooking the Hudson River and from time to time he would shake his head as if he was trying not to rid himself of the things he could have done.