

<2021-01-11 Mon>

James N. V. Cash

Contents

Goodboy wandered through the echoing concrete hallways, the sound of his claws clacking on the hard floor echoing. He sniffed the air, hoping for a hint of his quarry, but he could detect nothing but the overwhelming noxious fumes from whatever this place had been. He padded through the endless corridors, sticking his snout in each doorway he went past, taking a brief sniff, then continuing on.

Finally, he reached the entrance by which he had come in, with nothing to show for it. Frustrated but not discouraged, he let out a small whine, then trotted out the door into the pale light outside.

Surveying the broken terrain, the Goodboy sniffed the wind, pointed his snout in the direction that smelled most like what he sought, and resuming walking. As he walked, he *thought*, still something of a novelty for him. It was recently that he gained this ability -- looking back, his memories of a few months ago seemed much richer and vibrant, more texture. He could still thinking back to before-times -- being a puppy, running and playing, going for walks -- but those memories felt like looking through a blanket, while those of a more recent vintage were crystal-clear. He couldn't quite recollect exactly what happened at the transition -- that remained a curious blank -- but this whole "thinking" and "reflection" business was quite new, so maybe that would come in time.

As the light began to fade, the Goodboy began searching for a place to sleep for the night. Snuffling about, he uncovered a shallow depression under some debris lying on the side of the road, which seemed as comfortable as anything he was likely to find.

Curling up to sleep, he could hear the sounds which he dreaded hearing every night. Curling tighter and resisting the urge to whimper, the Goodboy was brave, ignored the halting, plodding footsteps, and eventually drifted into an uneasy slumber.