

The Day of the Dog

by Phillip W. Weiss

Today was Hal's birthday. Agnes had promised to take treat him to dinner. Many years ago they had briefly been lovers but things did not work out and they went their separate ways. Then one day Hal ran into Agnes in the subway. Despite the passage of time, they still recognized each other. Agnes told Hal that after they split she met and had a long term relationship with one of Hal's friends, Ernie. Hal hadn't seen Ernie in years. That relationship ended when Ernie died. Hal told Agnes that he was still single. Ernie and Agnes continued to exchange pleasantries and finally their telephone numbers. They exited the subway and wished each other all the best. Hal didn't give his meeting with Agnes a second thought and soon he forgot about it. He did not expect to hear from Agnes again. A few days later Agnes called Hal. She told Hal that she remembered that soon it would be his birthday and offered to treat him to dinner. Hal thought about this for a moment, hesitating whether to accept the invitation from someone who really was no longer part of his life, but then said okay and thanked her for the invitation. After the conversation ended, Hal quickly wrote off Agnes's invitation as a fluky gesture of generosity from someone who did not owe him anything and did not expect to hear from her again. Two weeks later his birthday arrived. For

Hal it was just another day. Being a senior citizen, a birthday meant he had one less year to live. Then, to his great surprise, Agnes called and reminded Hal of her offer to treat him to dinner for his birthday. Hal said okay and told Agnes to meet him at a certain diner located in Hal's neighborhood. Agnes said no and insisted that he meet her at a restaurant located in her neighborhood. She told Hal that she did not want to travel to his neighborhood because she did not want to be situated too far away from her dog. Hal became incensed and said, "So, while you're with me you'll be thinking about your dog. I don't need this and further, I couldn't care less about your dog." Meal or no meal, the idea of a woman expecting him to play second-fiddle to a dog, especially on his birthday, was too much for Hal to bear and he told Agnes to get lost and hung up on her. There were more important things in life than having dinner, Hal thought with conviction. After all, wasn't he better than a dog?