

From Beyond

by Brianne Fidgety

Someday they'll find me face-down in a puddle of ink.

The neighbours have been complaining about the stench. Decay and defile infiltrated the entire building about a week ago, but in places like this, the Super is notoriously apathetic.

Eventually, after several threats that mention the D.E.P. and Housing Council, attempts are finally made to locate the origin of the unpleasantness. A child offers a delicious piece of information:

"I haven't seen that strange lady from the fourth floor in a while. You know the one. She only comes out at night and is always mumbling funny words that nobody understands. And she smells weird, too, like every flower in the forest all at once. Wanna know how I know about that? One time, I went on a camping trip with the Boy Scouts when I was still in it. That was two years ago."

The proper authorities, with a gaggle of gawkers in tow, knock on what was formerly my door. They dispense a stream of well-worn politeitudes.

"Hello, miss?"

"Excuse me?"

"Are you okay in there?"

The apartment itself makes no response, so they cautiously, apprehensively, turn the tarnished knob and nudge the rotting slab of Mahogany wood inward on its rusty hinges, which scream in protest.

The crimson curtains are drawn, but enough sunlight steals through the gaps in the fabric to illuminate the gruesome scene awaiting the onlookers.

The shell of my former self is quietly slumped over what was once my writing desk. In life, I loved that thing dearly. I had found it about three years ago at a flea market in a surrounding suburb. There had been plans for the object, big ones. But I never got around to refinishing it with a nice walnut stain. It holds me close, waiting for me to spring back up and make use of it again. We had conceived many fictional children together; some had been hideous, some fragile, but all sublime and beautiful. It knows that it is the only mate for me, my polyamorous affection for black ink and innocent notebooks aside.

The odor of bodily transformation is nearly as wretch-inducing as the sight. Flies dance and weave through the gaping holes of my fetid flesh. They have a healthy respect for the bacteria happily feasting upon the acquired banquet. If I haven't been watching the process of decomposition for so long, I would probably be more disturbed by the scene than the still-living. Then again, my opinion really doesn't matter anymore.

"What a way to go," an old man remarks as he takes off his hat and places it over what is left of my face. I had expired between spasmodic blinking, so my orbits remained separated and wide and possessing the same soul-stealing quality they had exhibited in life. The irises are a blazing goldenrod, sort of like how the sun looks when one squints at it too hard. Until a few seconds ago, they were overly-effective unnerve agents. The people are more than uncomfortable to meet my vacant gaze for any extended period of time. Perhaps they fear that I am lonely and will use my dead eyes to seize one of their closely-guarded souls and force him or her into being an unwilling Necropolian companion. Is that how the living think? I'm starting to forget.

I'm amazed at how calmly they chit-chat about the weather.

The police corral the civilians out as the coroner crew stampedes in. Flashbulbs explode and fragmented observations are jotted onto fetus-sized notebooks. They show more respect for me than anybody else has all day. A solemn Forensic student even restrains her vomit until after she carefully zips closed my temporary plastic coffin. It's her first time at a real crime scene. I can only hope that she has a stronger stomach for the next one. A seasoned man who is less distracted by the reversal of digestion notices that some papers had taken the dubious job of a makeshift post-life pillow. He gingerly peels them from the side of my once face and head. It is no easy task; dried ink, side effects of decomposition, and constantly-applied pressure are cajoled and coaxed into relinquishing their stubborn grip upon the parchment. They're placed into a Ziploc® bag for later analysis and sealed into a satisfying vacuum of smugness.

A few months later, newspapers run articles that outline my demise. The same picture always seems to accompany it. It was taken right after I graduated high school. I grin sheepishly at the reader, my long, windswept curls accentuating a face full of naive optimism. That's false advertisement. I've kept my hair short for years.

In brief:

The author, best known for her Kafkaesque fiction and reclusive behaviour, was found in her apartment. The coroner concluded that she had lay dead on her writing desk for about two weeks. The cause of death has been reported as an aneurysm, although theories abound that hint at something much more sinister. The most popular rumour centers around an idea so incredibly bright that it utterly consumed her being. She attempted to record it, and as she did so, the energy it generated was so great that it destroyed capillaries and neurons before exciting molecules to such

a high state that a large area of her brain and the pen she was clutching, for lack of a better term, exploded.
Papers at the scene seem to support this outlandish explanation.
"The words.
The words!
The words are
brighter than life.
They are annhil"
was all that was discernible through the amount of ink and decay which covered the papers.
She lived in mystery and left one as her legacy.

The last line fills me with pride, a tough residue still left over from my previous existence.

