

Takes Her Body To Where Her Eyes Have Been

by Chris Okum



It's A Beautiful Day

They met during bingo night at the Uarc Assisted Living Facility in Woodstock, New York. She pretended not to acknowledge him at first, but then gave a quick, sharp glance while pursing her lips to indicate active hostility. He set his facial features to appear disinterested after determining he would not have liked her at any

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point in what was turning out to be an interminable existence. They decided that a relationship of any kind, even as casual acquaintances, would be impossible. They were careful to avoid each other in the halls and the dining room and at any time when they were not being forced into some kind of group activity. He imagined her family was happy to have her warehoused far away from them, and she imagined the same of him. He spoke like a pre-World War 2 Maine fisherman, and she still used slang from the 1960s. On the rare occasion when they talked on the telephone to a family member, they made sure the conversation revolved around how they had recently met and could not stand each other. When they knew they were going to be forced into proximity they rehearsed what they would say to each other, locking in pre-existing arguments to current topics that may or may not have been brought up. To give meaning to the end of their lives they fostered constant resentment regarding imagined slights. She programmed her personality to resist societal changes that required more than a minute's worth of analysis. He whittled down his emotions so that he could only express negativity even when confronted with facts that contradicted how he wanted to feel. They had copied all aspects of their behavior from movies they could not remember and were now confusing with dreams they never had. From what they observed at Uarc, they were careful to exhibit only behavior which had not been approved by their peer group. He died in an ambulance on the way to the hospital while suffering a massive stroke which began as a faint throb behind his left eye. She died in hospice care from the effects of kidney cancer while listening to the local popular talk radio station as it played a re-broadcast of their most famous host calling for the extermination of everyone who did not believe in our lord and savior. He was cremated and kept in an urn on a table in his daughter's black mold-infested condominium. Her body was stuffed into the cheapest coffin available and then placed in a crypt also containing her husband, who had died forty years before her and whom she had not thought of at all in the last ten. He lived a life of boisterous despair. She lived a life of hushed bewilderment. They

both decided at the moment of their deaths to haunt those who had treated them like broken appliances and then realized this would be impossible as they were shoved and kicked into a vibrating deep bright hole by a group of giggling elves.

History

He searched for the word implex. He was reading a book about the legacy of impressionism in contemporary culture, and he kept coming across the word implex. He must have seen the word at least 30 times over the course of fifteen pages, and each time he saw the word he said to himself, "I don't know what that word means." He kept telling himself to put the book down, get up, walk over to the computer, and search for the definition of the word implex so that he could understand what he was reading about, but there was something about not understanding what he was reading about that made what he was reading about more interesting. He wanted to see if he could deduce what the word meant by all the surrounding words, but it never happened. The meaning of the word implex remained elusive and was causing him to lose interest in what he was reading, and he didn't want to lose interest because he believed there was something he needed to understand about the subject of the book. His mother was an avid collector of Thomas Kinkade paintings and whenever he visited her, she would make him stare at the paintings. "I've always been a huge fan of impressionism," his mother told him. He stared at the Thomas Kinkade paintings and could not find anything to like about them. His mother asked him if he found the paintings as comforting as she did, and since he wanted to be nice to his mother and not get into an argument with her, he said he did. But the paintings did the opposite of comfort him. They made him nervous. The thought of living in the middle of nowhere by himself, in a small cottage, made him think of home invaders, anonymous strangers standing still outside his kitchen window in the middle of the night wearing Rowdy Roddy Piper masks and holding machetes. He looked at the brilliant light coming

from inside the house Kinkade had painted and he pictured himself tied to a chair, a tomato jammed into his mouth and duct taped into place, being forced to stare directly into the scorching hot bulb of a lamp without its shade, and being asked questions for which he had no answers, like what does the word implex mean. He also searched for the word tache. Thomas Kinkade died as a result of acute intoxication from alcohol and diazepam. His girlfriend said he died happy in the house he had built, surrounded by his paintings, and the woman he loved. It was reported that Kinkade had a long history of cursing and heckling other artists and performers, that he openly fondled a woman's breasts at a South Bend, Indiana, sales event, and had a habit of ritual territory marking by urination, once relieving himself on a Winnie the Pooh figure at the Disneyland Hotel in Anaheim while saying, "This one's for you, Walt."

