

Resurrection

by Lillian Ann Slugocki

I was enraged that he had left so much of his life behind. Why did it become my job to throw out his hideous dress shirt with purple and pink flowers? Why was I left with the album of wedding photos? I didn't want to see the Valentine's Day cards, the birthday cards, his worn out underwear, the mismatched socks, the unexpected picture that dropped to the floor from a book. I cried, yes, but it was reflexive, automatic. I barely noticed. It wasn't important. It just completed the picture. So I shoved it all back in the closet, and started sleeping with a lot of strange men.

After it was over, I thought, I have to get out of here. Now. I would get up and pretend that I had to go to the bathroom, but really I needed to reassure myself that I could make a quick get-a-way. My exit needed to be surgical, clean. I needed to know that I could find all my belongings strewn between the sheets, on the floor, behind the couch, underneath the bed, the blankets. I panicked when I made a mental list of everything, and found that I was missing something. What if I couldn't leave immediately, what if I had to stay because I couldn't find my brassiere or my earrings or my watch? Often they were pissed, my dates. Often they turned surly, felt neglected, maybe emasculated, I don't know. I tried to be nice about it, as nice as I possibly could, but with panic rising in my throat this was sometimes impossible.

One night, one tall man with cow brown eyes ordered up cartons of Chinese take-out, opened up numerous bottles of good red wine. And when he slid his pants off, his jewel colored underwear horrified me, but I fucked him anyway. Afterwards I passed out and when I woke up, I was in such a state of panic I couldn't breathe. I am sure it was not a pleasant sight. Rudely awakened, confused and bewildered, he stood stone silent and watched me flee. I barely managed to keep my wits together, didn't and couldn't pretend that I

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wasn't running out of his bedroom as if my life depended on it. He wouldn't call me a cab, wouldn't help me gather up my things, wouldn't say or do a thing.

All the while, I had the most ridiculous smile pasted on my face. And even though he lived in the financial district, totally deserted on a Sunday morning, and even though he would not walk me outside, I flew, literally out the door, the second I had my shit together. I walked onto the dawn streets of that deserted neighborhood and felt like I had just risen from the dead. I began to live for that moment. That resurrection. Like Lazurus, like Jesus Christ because I had escaped with my life. This was better than suicide fantasies, better than drugs, better than the casual seduction in a corner bar on West Broadway.

Because I could believe that I had control over life again. That I wasn't staring a dead marriage in the face. That I still slept on my side of the bed. That my ex and I met for a chaste breakfast on Saturdays, and afterwards wiped his mouth after he kissed me good bye. It wasn't a trial separation anymore--- he was never coming home. On those dawn streets, fleeing from any number of lovers, I had remade myself into a woman who was no longer grieving, who didn't have to be a good girl anymore, who fucked them and forgot them, rising up like a warrior in the back seat of a yellow cab, making conversation with a Pakistani or Somali driver.

One Sunday morning, 5:00 a.m., I didn't go to bed when I got home. I gathered up everything; the photos, the ticket stubs, the letters, the cards, even the underwear. I wasn't going to be a historian anymore; notating the time, the date, the years of our life together as if I could construct a narrative that made sense, it didn't make sense. It never would. I dragged out the cheap aluminum grill in the backyard, dumped it all in, sprayed it with lighter fluid, and set it ablaze. It burned like a bitch. It burned like hell. When it was over, the sun was up. When it was over, the ashes still hot, I poured

water on it, kicked it over for good measure, and then went to bed.

