

The Bottle

by Matthew Simmons

That bottle just sits there in the closet, next to the hats and a box full of old gloves. Years it's been there. Try as we might, we never open it. We just don't have a damn thing to celebrate.

Who was it brought that bottle into our lives and went and ruined everything is what I want to know. Was it not there, it would have never once occurred to us that we have nothing to drink to, and are therefore in trouble, as far as our relationship is concerned.

It's like that bottle in that closet has a stink. Did you notice? Do you smell it, too? We do. Much as we use air fresheners—metaphorical ones, as it is a metaphorical stink—we just can't make it go away.

And, we try.

In three days, my wife will leave me because of that Goddamned bottle. I know this because I had a dream. My dreams, they all come true exactly like I dream them. My marriage has a count down. My wife wants to know why I'm making red X's on the calendar.

When she goes, I'm going to open the bottle, and drink it. All of it. And, I'm going to use it to chase a bunch of codeine-spiked aspirin I got after I had wisdom teeth pulled.

Here's a terrible thing about my upcoming bottle-caused/bottle-related suicide attempt: Though I'm going to be brain dead for five whole minutes, they're going to manage to revive me. I'm never going to be the same, but I'll live another 35 years. And then, I'll be hit by a city bus.

Wifeless and stupid, that'll be me.

I'll still have the dreams, the ones that tell me how things will happen, but since I won't be right in the head, I'll never understand that my dreams of the future are bound to come true. It will never occur to me that I have this great gift, this terrible curse.

I am doomed.

My wife just asked me why I'm locked in the bathroom and why it sounds like I'm weeping. I pushed a note under the door that has on it the new phone number she'll get when she moves out.

I don't even remember what's in the bottle, truth be told. Could be whiskey. Could be vodka. Could be gin. Hell, it could be vermouth. I'll still drink the whole thing when the wife exits, stage left.

She has hazel eyes. She is five feet, three inches tall. She has a womanly figure. I will remember these three things about her for the rest of my life, and will, in fact, be repeating them to myself—mumbling them to myself—when I drink the bottle, and when I walk out in front of the city bus. The first time, the mantra will tear me up inside. The second time, it will be a subconscious refrain, practically meaningless.

Because of the bottle, I will spend the rest of my life doing yard work around the neighborhood for five and ten dollar bills.

