

Burning White by Joseph Petroky

“Right this way . . . Sir.” the officer lead me under the yellow tape blocking the door, and into the apartment. The blank white walls burned back at me, the stench of bleach tethered itself in my nostrils and refused to leave. “Not much to see really, didn’t exactly leave a mess.” She was right, of course, the stench told the truth of it.

The bright, white walls of the entrance shifted into the bright, white walls of the kitchenette, dining room, and living room. Blank, white cupboards staired out from the left at the drawn, white curtains opposite them. The counter was bear and clean. The linoleum glistened and sparkled. The white leather armchair and loveseat sat facing an ivory coffee table ahead of us. On the right sat a plain, white, circular table; large enough for one to sit at, though there was no chair.

In the middle of the room, between the ivory coffee table and I, was a lump. A long, white lump; like a fabric-scaled snake. It lay there, perfect and clean. At one end, the hand reached out, out for someone, something. The other end ended abruptly in a stump. There was no blood, just pale white fabric and shadow from the lights.

A sigh, from the officer that lead me in. Her eyes are unfocussed, staring at the white wall, before refocussing on the disembodied arm. Her face pales, trying to blend in with the walls. The attempt is feeble, which the dark blue uniform mocks.

“Any ideas?” she asks, she faces the arm, but her eyes swing toward me. The brown is dark and murky against the bright white shining past them. Her lips quiver under my stare, and the brown in her eyes disappears to the arm once more.

“No.” I say simply, “Have you?”

She starts, perhaps she hadn’t expected an answer. She certainly hadn’t expected that question. “N-no.” Her hands are pale as she rubs the dark blue sleeves on her arms. She stifles a shiver, turns, and leaves. Her reaction is expected. They don’t like working by our side, some consider our existence criminal in itself. We have use to them, though, and we are only allowed to these types of cases.

No blood in site.

Not just in site, none at all. The stench of bleach burns and steams in my lungs, but the bitter, copper scent of blood would slice through it were it here. It is not though, there is no blood, not now, not ever. The bleach burns louder, and I have to leave.

Out in the hall again, cool air fills my lungs and I can breath. Bleach taints the flavour, but only in whisps and gasps now. The hallway ends in darkness at both ends. The scent of urine and old sex blends with the murky dark as it inches closer. The rank of bleach is no longer a smell in my nostril, it is a light in my mind. The darkness stretches toward me, the bleach light, dim and frail, fights and falls.

All is dark.

I sit up right and try to catch my breath. I don’t know where I am, and don’t know where my breath is. I feel a thin film of cold sweat covering my exposed body. I am naked. My flesh burns with the cool air pressed upon it.

It was nothing, a dream, a nightmare. I lay back down, and close my eyes. My bed creaks with my weight, and I can not sleep. My pillow is moist with salty sweat. I turn it, and try to rest. My breath still escapes me, I roll over, finding blankets not yet soiled by my skin. The bed lurches and I tumble down, down, down . . .

“Any ideas?”

I blink. The white burns my eyes. The cupboards judge me. The loveseat lies in wait, ready to rip me apart. “Any ideas?” She stares at me through the corner of her eyes, and I feel my lips tremble.

“N-no.” I say, and she turns and leaves. She leaves through the doorway, into the darkness. The darkness comes through the doorway into me. Sex and urine bleed through the bleach, the light fades and I am -

I don't know where I am. I can not see. I can not feel. The piss and sweat have left and been replaced with nothing. And the nothing is all around me, and no where. There is nothing for me to feel and I feel nothing.

Nothing at all.

Something jabs into my ribs. A sharp, pointy something. Many sharp, pointy something are jabbing into me, I roll over and only find more. The sun blazes above me, burning into my weary eyes. I sit up, ignore the gravel engraving my flesh with forgotten curses, and look around.

I am in a lot. There is a building many metres away. I am in a parking lot. I am in a gravel parking lot, and I am nude.

Blood covers much of my body, I smell the copper everywhere, and its sweet taste fills my mouth. The gravel hurts, and points, and jabs, but this blood is not mine. The taste is wrong, the scent too sweet.

I rub the scar on my ankle, absently; my dreams were so strange last night. I am so tired now.

My body aches, as if I has spent the night with the weight of the moon on my shoulders, which isn't so far from the truth.

The sun burns bright above me, not a cloud in the sky. I hate the when the clouds obscure the sky in the night. Making one nightmare become many.

The full moon sucks, but man, fuck clouds.