

A BODY UNFURLED

by Seb Harper

The umbrellas rattle in their bin as I drop my walking cane next to them. The sound echoes in my apartment. It vibrates and reverberates between my ears. Shaking my head, I take off my coat and hang it up neatly. As I hang my hat up, I pause to run my hands over the soft velvet. I stand in the entryway, stroking it back and forth. It grounds me. For a time. My breathing becomes even and my eyes close. I linger for longer than I should.

Blood-white tears form on my fingers, dripping marrow on the dark hardwood floor. My body shudders as my eyes shut. When I open them again, the floor is unstained and my hands are untorn.

~~forge~~I never should have learnt that damnable language.

Fighting my own thoughts, I glide and stumble through the empty halls. Grounding myself has become harder. Still I try. Searching the study, I will myself focus on things I know to be real. The green velvet chair that was my grandfather's, the cherry wood desk that was my father's, the embroidered puppy my mother made.

~~just a little~~It helps a bit here

I fall into my grandfather's chair. It cradles me like a mother. It holds me like a vice. Taking a deep breath, I steady my racing heartbeat.

~~ours~~ I will be fine.

I slip into the wet folds of my brain, searching for solace. Like a wounded alley cat, I hide beneath the filthy bins and the rotting waste of my mind. This is my last sanctuary. They have taken my green palace. My red fields. All my cherished memories.

~~can't I should never have~~I should never have yearned for that knowledge

Ever since my lips formed the First Syllable, I have started Knowing. I can understand them now. Entities without voices, without souls, have started speaking to me. Even the bones in my body speak to me. And they hate.

What have I done. ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~ ~~let us out~~

Beneath my skin, the bones itch. Prisoners of flesh and muscle that thirst for freedom. They call out to fungi and wasps, flies and maggots. They beg the decomposers to pick them clean. To consume this flesh and blood.

Flies and wasps and fungi and worms. ~~white and clean~~ ~~white and clean~~ ~~white and clean~~ ~~white and clean~~ ~~white and clean~~ ~~white and clean~~

[illegible]

A laugh bursts out of me. I hear myself cackle as I fall out of the moldy soft chair. Peels of sound bounce off the walls, and I hold my ribs as I gasp for breath. Tears form in my eyes as my body lets out another hysterical howl.

I faced the Knowledge and won. My body is still my own. I gasp as glee runs through me again. My ribs hurt but the pain will subside. Eventually. Pain will fade just as nightmares must end.

My involvement in this incident will be in finite.

Myⁱⁿsanity will_{in} recover.
in never

will be

OUT