

*Cryonics***By Rosie Grace Ward**

Rising stoic in sync with the mechanical bed, her thick torso collected in the middle, gutty and ripe and grey. A foul ascension. Good morning to the day; and next, a nine pronged, gold plated syringe loaded with daily vitals, initials * * * cut twice into the metal plating, one below the other. This indicated her choice to maintain the same identity from her first birth. Gifted to her on the day of her rebirth, from the clinic that had so professionally and expensively delivered her. It screamed indulgence and each morning she greeted herself with a snort of incredulity. What a fucking farce, how ridiculous that she still reluctantly breathed.

“Thanks for waiting, everyone”; the empty room rolled its eyes.

When she was born (ding, round 2) her consciousness was pig slop for months, soupily swilling round the inner contours of her skull. She couldn't remember kicking and screaming into her birthday, and every memory or cognition to remind her of WHO SHE WAS (?) seemed to just evade her. As the doctor had told her (and of which she could only loosely remember), the first 2 weeks were barely discernible from a newborn's blind futility, and an utter oppression of the senses that she was starting to use again, for the first/second time. The rebirthing was also marked by the expulsion of her full set of adult teeth.

Although it was impossible for her to remember the immediate bodily rejection of a full set of teeth, rejected at the moment of her 1st (2nd?) breath (a perfectly normal reaction to the shock of forced life after death), she sometimes imagined the explosion of blood and bone, a pearly puddle on the floor and her bloody toothless grin, with a curious satisfaction. Those holes, netted with raw blood vessels, had now been blocked with shards of veneer, a luxury she had never in fact asked for and so must have come free with the 2nd life thrust upon her. She had been Tom Jonesed in her sleep, and now her own reflection was weird and cramped like cheap flats. Too clean. What the fuck?! They were so maniacal and obnoxious, screaming their presence, so close together!

It was strange to her that she could remember her dreams from before she had artificially died, and even more strange that this expulsion of bodily matter had so often been reflected in her sleep state during this time. A recurrent dream of tiny bones, brittle, snapping in half and crunching in her bloody hole, of swallowing splintered ivory needles. Her anxious, sickly youth had been littered with reoccurring dreams of tooth excavation, the loosening of an object from its flesh grip.

What bothered her really, was that they protruded in a way that made her flesh look like it was receding, escaping away from mouth. They made her look more like the skinless skull she could have been. Thin-skinned, the zombie she was.

To everyone else she just looked a bit ill, and because at this stage everyone was a bit ill, to them, she was a mirror; a grey narcissus, dry-heaving post-treatment stomachs onto their own reflections in the pond. To herself, she was a manifestation of her own ghost expelled from a rightfully, naturally decomposing body in some designated resting place. A spectre of her tumored past, she fingered the benign lumps beneath her skin, colonising her armpits and flattened breast tissue. She could no longer afford to get them cosmetically removed, and no longer cared enough to do so. She had begun to enjoy their familiarity, they acted as a key to her life before.

It was time to restart the day, already 2 hours too late from checking shit though in her mind. Memories, both welcome and otherwise would visit her when she woke and they took time to digest, contextualise, to remember the various components and characters.

Standing up, her feet began to belligerently swell as they now insisted on doing every single fucking morning. Warmth rising through her body she felt like a tank with a valve at the base, swelling with fetid oils and bodily liquids.

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Her upper torso and head was always a bit lukewarm, a packaged wedge of meat on the more frosty side of defrosting. It had been a long day already but it was going to get longer. Walking to the kitchen shedding blankets and night clothes on the concrete floor she reached the breakfast bar. Chic. Panoramic views of a networked architectural prison leered back through the floor to ceiling glass (chic-er) whilst she prepared a morning cocktail.

Protein powder (redeveloped for the living dead to stop them dying on their feet)
Kale
Ginseng
Epinephrine
Citalopram
Pro Plus

Energy gauge rising she cocooned herself back into the blankets. The sweat had subsided from her exodus from bedroom to living space and pressing BLEND so her temperature had started to plummet, reminding her that the heating meter had been ripped of the wall for 2 months and she had been cold ever since.

She threw her weight into the valley of a worn sofa. Pregnant with self loathing another day slowly unfolded, deliciously banal in thought and movement. One sentence of a book, the opening credits of a film and the suppressive cold of the apartment finally forced a reaction from her corpse.

She left the apartment and descended the 18 flights of stairs. There was no one to service it anymore. No one could or would. Clutching the handrail she thudded still on to the ground floor where the smell was real and rats danced and shrieked to the echoes of her expensive soles that slipped on polished concrete. No irony of expensive shoes having little grip, she had always thought.

The cavernous vault of the lobby were the pearly gates to a slimy amniotic slapped baby of real estate. Babies (plural). Maybe the metaphor was wrong. It had been 20 one bedrooms, 8 two bedrooms, 6 three bedrooms and a penthouse, so maybe a series of babies, spawned in test tubes, varying in size and power. I'm saying that those real estate agents loved those babies because the commission was HUGE but anyway they fell out of love with them as soon as the spot became disreputable once again, and now the building repelled them like a bunch of petulant teenagers belong reproach.

She was the only original owner left, and now her neighbours were low rent gatekeepers to the miserable tower. There was no running water or electricity on any floor but her own. She became the

vessel of their disdain. Slouching heavily around the building in gold she represented death and money, and slowly these guardians started to feel tightly bound to a dead animal.

Inspired by their hatred of her, she snapped out of her pathetic stupor. To come out of that vacuum was the feeling of falling, of dying, falling asleep on your back - supine and vampiric.

Her eyes un-glazed and she stared at a very huge and very tired tryptic. Nothing expressed, in abstract expressionlessism. Behind the now vacated chromatic front desk, they hung weakly against the walls, as light in form as in content. It was a sort of pitiful nostalgia, a regurgitated vibe again and again and again. The space curated fear of futurity and inspired a hopelessness that made her feel like her backbone would snap and her head would flop backwards and bounce off the floor.

She smirked and saw herself as she was to them, the guardians, as a calcified statue; the sole and solemn exhibit in a cautionary human museum where she was the object of curiosity and they, the curious.

She pushed herself out into thick cold air; smoke particles whirled artfully around her lumber-some bulk as she dispensed with the doubt that so often left her chained to this building - walking out. She deliberated on her own stupidity and the stupidity of her girlfriend to have bought into the ridiculous spectacle (now spectre) of the high-rise concrete block she was leaving behind. The penthouse seemed appropriate at the time, given their joint worth. At the time, this sector of London was flourishing and fat with all you can eat retail and restaurants that marketed pure gluttony as their raison d'être. Now it was on a sharp decline. Hollow carcasses of food joints belligerently stared out into the fractured traffic.

People didn't want to eat until they were sick anymore, which makes sense, in an evolutionary way. She had always speculated to Evelyn that it was weird how the Romans would eat themselves sick and that there they were, doing it all over again. History doesn't just repeat itself in genocides apparently but in ritual exercises of gluttony and the gag reflex and visits to the vomitorium, however that may manifest. These impulses should nonetheless probably be satiated in greed? She was reminded of Gilles De Rais, who, bored of his lifestyle of excess, with nothing left to desire, drove himself to a bloodlust that left a French province minus 600 boys. Is that how that works? Seems a little reactionary, maybe.

There had been something about going to those restaurants together and devouring limb after limb and arms and legs that had had a novelty value that they had been more than happy to shell out for. Excess was a privilege you could pay for. Going home to lie, sweating, on the cool bathroom floor until the nausea subsided was a clause in the contract that only bit you on the arse on the way home.

She had been alive for a year, dead for 6 before that. She had no concept of the time she had been dead, but this single year of breathing had felt a little something like the purgatory she would have experienced in her short death, had she's been conscious. The single year had taken on an aching longevity that felt out of her control.

Cancer had been deaths ultimate bitch 8 years previously, fucking the brains the livers, the colons, the ovaries, the knees, the skins, the tits, the testicles, bones and blood of 46.5% of the population. Either you were born without it baby, or your human shell would fuck you over and the whisper of your cells hysterically dividing and multiplying would become the theme tune to your life, a rattling tinnitus of fate.

Three years after she was born, medical advancements in the engineering of fertilized embryos had managed to remove cancer from all new borns from conception as long as you were prepared to foot the bill and were not so unfortunate as to conceive naturally.

You could be IVFed into existence, cancer free and prospective-mothers-to-be flocked to the clinics with the gold plaques outside and the marble foyers and the mid century furniture in the waiting room and the green palms and the tasteful art and the waiting staff eager to take an order of coffee. This had caused her own mother to spin out exponentially, like a possessed spool of thread, her obsession with her daughters mortality was the only thing that occupied the horizons of her vision. Man they had had the money, they had had the fucking cash to pay for that shit but it was too late, she was already BORN.

Her parents had made it rain diamonds on clinics and medical research centres begging them to locate some scientific loophole to save the life of their child who was actually at that point, fucking alive, they seemed to forget. Her whole life then revolved around her apparent lost potentiality. The subtleties of science, lost on a young child rendered her growing up clouded with imaginings of fingers dropping off, going mouldy, her eyes falling out her head. Her parents lives became dictated by their distinct lack of the ability to chill, and subsequently left her in quiet resentment for the majority of her “genes not good enough” childhood.

It was 15 years after her parents deaths, strung painfully out by visits to clinic after clinic for their own life extending treatments (they were lost causes, but it didn't mean that they wanted to accept mortality like the rest of the population must), that the first cryonic resurrection was performed. 5 years previously, she herself succumbed to her own cancer, a fate that had haunted her since she first was dragged on marble floors to warm offices to be wrapped in cold stethoscopes. In her last few days where she had held and kissed hands goodbye, other secret hands had been signing contracts and writing cheques. Within 24 hours she was hanging upside down in a tank of liquid nitrogen, with antifreeze laced through her tissues and her blood running cold.