

Morbid Art

Elena Pacheco

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Red. Scarlet. Crimson. *Vermillion*. Splattered in artistic strokes on the pale walls. I looked down at the lifeless body, as pale as these walls used to be, blonde hair turned strawberry-blonde by the blood seeping from her skull. *So long Diana*. This was *my* masterpiece, and nobody else's. Artists boast about the divinity of portraying life onto a lifeless canvas, yet what could be more aesthetic than the once vibrant and energetic young woman completely silent and in her own pool of blood before me? I, unlike traditional artists, made art by taking away the vitality of my sources, seizing them to the most silent and tranquil state one can achieve - death. This hobby of mine engulfed me, filled me up and replenished my vacant and hollow existence. It seemed all I could think about between the suffocating hours of work at the office and the time spent at home where only the echo of my own voice greeted me, was the prospect of creating another masterpiece, taking the life out of yet another being.

Much like many other artists, I sought new forms of creativity. I had a technique, unlike other vulgar killers whose sloppy work reflected the outcome of a primitive and uncontrollable burst of passion. While performing ordinary tasks like taking a trip to the grocery store, I scanned the aisles discretely for my new artistic endeavor.

Tall woman, dark brown hair, hazel eyes; reminded me too much of Francesca, a woman I'd slit the throat of.

Short, dark-skinned woman, immaculate smile; reminded me too much of Phoebe, whom I dismembered a month ago.

Curvy, average height woman, light brown hair; reminded me too much of Linda, whom I strangled to death.

Dark haired woman, large framed glasses; reminded me of-

"I'm so sorry!" the bespectacled woman wore an apologetic look on her flushed face. It took me a moment to realize, too preoccupied in looking another direction, she had crashed her shopping cart onto mine.

"It's... totally okay," I smiled. "It's really not a problem."

The timid woman brushed a strand of dark hair behind her ear and adjusted her spectacles, too large for her almond eyes. I noticed the freckles on her nose, haphazardly

scattered, and her petite hands, nails colored a soft purple. My mind raced with excitement, my pulse accelerated; I acknowledged it was this woman whose life I'd be taking next. Oh, how wonderful her fair skin would look in contrast with her own seeping blood.

Cheeks still flustered, the woman turned her shopping cart away from me after offering a weak smile. I reciprocated the smile and rushed to finish my grocery shopping while she finished hers. Morbid thoughts began to fill my dark, dark mind. Grocery bags already in hand, I slithered through the cars in the parking lot, keeping an eye out for my prospective artistic subject. She drove a sleek black car in which she placed her groceries neatly in the trunk while looking around, as if apprehensive of her surroundings. She was right; she had reason to be cautious when people like me existed.

Wasting no time, I slipped into my own car, tossing the groceries lazily onto the backseat. I inhaled as I started the engine, a huge smile unravelling itself onto my lips. Making sure not to lose sight of my subject, I remained unnoticed as I travelled behind her black car through familiar neighborhoods and streets. Oak tree after oak tree, front yard after front yard, and *finally* her car slowed down in pace as it entered the garage of a specific home whose details I made sure to inscribe in my mind. Perfectly cut lawn, neat little arrays of flowers, a dog too amiable looking to cause me any hindrance. I made sure to park my car several houses away from hers to refrain from arousing suspicion, and, with folded arms above my chest, I began to contemplate how this task would be done.

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Hazel. Golden. *Viridescent*. Irises delineated by the most spectacular amber color with just the right amount of golden, greenish hues. Dark lashes framing those petite eyes, wide glasses shyly perched onto a freckled nose. Her lips were colored a red so vivid it mocked my bloody masterpieces, foreshadowed this woman's fatal ending. Dark hair swooped into a long ponytail and clothed in a black button-up shirt, she typed away, clearly unaware of my presence. An ID on her shirt had a meager little picture of her and under it read *Librarian*.

I interrupted her nonchalance after clearing my throat, "Excuse me, ma'am, I can't find the book I've been looking for."

Her eyes shot up in my direction and her typing halted immediately, she involuntarily raised an eyebrow at my familiarity.

I chimed, “Oh hey you’re the one I bumped into at the grocery store! Funny running into you here!”

She raised both her eyebrows as if realizing the immense coincidence and smiled shyly, “Oh yes, I remember you... well I work here so yeah... funny seeing you here.”

“It certainly is.”

“What was it that you needed help with? Finding a book? What’s the title?”

Oh crap. “Uhm, that’s the thing... I need help finding a book. Period.”

Clearly amused, she chuckled loudly then turned beet red once she realized the volume of her laugh. I noticed her nametag read *Clarisse*, a name that seemed to suit her. After routinely slipping her hair behind her ear, Clarisse motioned towards the nearest bookshelf labelled *Top Literature Picks!* A collection of *Catcher in the Rye*, *Jane Eyre*, *Catch-22*, and *The Great Gatsby* filled the shelves along with *To Kill a Mockingbird* and numerous other classics.

“Have you read any of these? I recommend them all.”

“Some. In high school,” I claimed. “Any recommendations?”

She scanned the shelves thoughtfully and, after a moment, took out a book titled *In Cold Blood*, an ironic selection that almost made me grin. Clarisse’s eyes roamed across my face, as if deciphering my features for any visible expression.

She reckoned, “It’s a really good book. Makes one realize the atrocities some humans are capable of.”

I cleared my throat, “A book about murder? Too gory for a guy like me.” I wondered if that was convincing. My casual attire and neat hairstyle perhaps did cause people to see me for what I aimed to be seen as – a simple, calm guy working at an office whose main problems were getting a coffee in the morning and finishing those darn papers the manager asked me for days ago.

“Oh, right, okay.” She grabbed another random book, then another, then another, the pile stacking on my arms. “These are all good. I loved each one of them.”

“Perfect!”

Her eyes seemed to glitter as she spoke on and on, “Well, you see, this one has a really good ending, and this one has a really good plot, and this one...”

She talked to me about various books for what seemed like an hour. I contemplated asking her to join me for dinner, perhaps at my own house to make it easier to kill her. Plus, it gave me a sufficient amount of time to prepare. I kept nodding and smiling politely as she talked, and she seemed to really like it.

After a long while, I hadn't realized we were already in another section of the library. She suddenly stopped mid-sentence, a blush creeping up onto her cheeks once again, and questioned, “Would you like to get coffee some time? Lunch maybe?”

To say I was shocked was a huge understatement. This was going to be the easiest kill yet!

“I have to go run an errand in a while,” I lied. “How's dinner? I'll be home by then. My house?” It seemed a little sudden, but I was eager to make her my masterpiece. She nodded, and after exchanging phone numbers, I giddily left the library, a huge grin on my face.

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Clarisse – sweet, sweet girl. Dinner turned out to be the most enjoyable meal I'd ever had. I was enjoying our conversation so much, I almost forgot about my task.

“What about your parents?” I wanted to know more without even realizing it. “Are they still around?”

Her oval face got solemn, hazel eyes downward. I wanted to hug her, comfort her, yet the image of a knife across her throat kept flashing in my mind.

“They're... dead. They were killed when I was 6,” she answered, eliciting a surprised reaction from me. ***Just like mine. Except mine were killed right in front of me.***

“They were killed... right in front of me,” she choked, her voice thinning.

“So were mine...” my voice trailed off, almost a whisper.

“I was just a kid! I mean, so young! So hopeless. I blamed their deaths on myself!”

It was as if she was reciting my own catastrophic life event. The day that changed it all.

Her voice was frail, “It was my fault... my fault... my fault...”

My fault, my fault... the words were booming in my head, my pulse skyrocketed as memories of a bleak and bloody night flooded my subconscious. Then, a scream filled my thoughts. My own scream. My own six-year old scream. What a coincidence. We were both the same age when our parents were killed. *My fault, my fault...*

“I still have nightmares of it. I feel so hollow... so empty...”

Just like me.

I had to kill her. I was bound to get too attached to someone whose experiences coincided so much with mine.

Voice shaky, I stood up, “I-I need to go to the bathroom.”

My vision was a mosaic of colors, knees weak, I felt breathless. Even at my age, I was still shaken by a reminiscence of that moribund night. I had to kill her.

I grabbed the knife I had appointed as my paintbrush for this macabre masterpiece. It was time for my favorite hobby, yet it wasn't giving me the sensations I'd experienced before. After entering the kitchen once again - knife in one hand and a tranquilizing needle in the other - I approached Clarisse. *Poor, sweet Clarisse whose parents were killed in front of her.*

I was a few feet away from her as she ate. My usually steady hand failed me, jittering wildly as I held the needle in my hand. *You can't kill her, she's just like you! Just like you!*

I could do it so easily! *But she knows what you've been through...* The voice in my head wouldn't stay silent. With an almost audible sigh and a furious grunt, I marched back to my room, kneeling down in order to reach the box in which I'd put back the knife.

To my bitter surprise, a piece of rope was restrained onto my neck, my eyes fully widening. Quicker than I could process, my own tranquilizer was inserted onto my neck, my

vision becoming a blur, air becoming scarce as the rope gripped my neck ferociously. Even my limbs became useless.

A whisper in my ear, through clenched teeth, “You really bought that sob story, huh. Your own story!” *Clarisse*. The rope tightened even more around my neck, scraping the skin and making me clench my teeth.

She raised a knife into the air and I saw colors. Red. Scarlet. Crimson. Vermillion. My own blood.