

Black Bin Bags

by

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The food in this house spoils too quickly. Milk lasts a couple of days, cheese goes black after a week and we have six rotten eggs rotting away on the top shelf of our fridge. *He* never took enough care to shut the damned thing properly and nothing can keep if the conditions are wrong. The conditions are wrong for everything here. It all expires before it should.

We have no black bin bags left either. It's always been *his* job to get those. We only have the see-through ones we use for recycling and I can't use them to throw away the spoiled food. Marilyn's curtains would twitch gleefully if I did that. No – I won't do it. She's not allowed that satisfaction. The kitchen will simply have to smell rancid for another day until *he* brings some home. No doubt, *he* will moan about the smell when *he* walks through the door but I also have no doubt that *he* will do nothing about it. Spite will drive me to dwell in this sewer until my skin turns black. I'm fine with that. *He* has to buy the bin bags.

I shut the windows, denying the house fresh air. Now the smell is contained, it intensifies. I gag. I smile. *He* will hate it. But that still isn't enough. It's bad but not bad enough to force *him* to buy them. I shut the curtains too. The house is choked by darkness and I am nesting in its foul throat. I bring my hands up to my own and swallow, feeling the bile fall and rise up again inside. I want him to know this. I want him to live this. I want to see him vomiting so violently that his vital organs pool at his feet. I want his skin to scale over when he tries to scuttle away from the smell. I want to see his body convulse as he falls to the floor and chokes on his own tongue. I want to bear witness to it all. And then I want to tell people that he died because he forgot to bring home black bin bags. A cautionary tale to the domesticated man.

The phone is ringing now. I wouldn't usually answer but it's rang twice already and takes too long to go to voicemail. I pick up the phone. It's *his* mother. The crow who raised an incompetent son.

“Sylvie – are you there?” she squawks.

I answer ‘yes’.

“Oh, my dear. How *are* you?”

I answer ‘fine’. I ask her the same.

“Well – you know...”

I do know.

“Have I caught you at a bad time?”

She has.

“I'll ring you back later.”

I don't really care whether she does or whether she doesn't. I won't be picking up either way.

I turn back to the food in the fridge now. The fridge light is dim from the time it has spent exhausting itself trying to preserve what's left of the good inside. I don't blame it for giving up. It can only do so much with the door left open. A swamp of raw meat juice is festering at the bottom and I realise that I'm disappointed: no maggots. I don't know how to make them come, though, and I won't turn my mobile on to google it. It hasn't been switched on for weeks and I don't have the stomach for it now. I am too busy digesting other things.

I'm slowly getting used to the smell now but that's not what I want. So, even though it's midday in mid-June, I turn the heating on and wait. *He* would kill me for wasting *his* money but, to my delight, the revulsion returns. I turn the oven on next and I am devoured again by disgust. I heave in a most heavenly way as the thickness of the air engulfs me. Sheer divinity suffocates me with spoiled meat and methane. Around me, greasy hot tentacles begin to unfurl themselves. They seize the tip of my nose. Then, they trail slime up my nostrils. They're creeping further, and further, and further. It hurts. I can feel them digging for my organs, rooted behind my eyes. I know they're reaching for my lungs further and further and further still. I can't breathe. I don't want to breathe. *He* will find me blue on the ground.

But then, a slam of the letterbox. They retract.

My body betrays me by breathing again. Eyes adjusted to the darkness, I stagger through the stench towards the front door where I see a perfect pale envelope taunting me from the ground. I scream. My release – my surrender – now just another thing in this house spoiled too soon. I spit on the envelope as I did with every one that had come before. *He* would be mad at me for that. It could be from *his* Uncle Ernest or *his* cousin, Kurt, or *his* ex-girlfriend, Evelyn or someone else that had never concerned themselves with me before. Yes, it'll be addressed to me but written for *him*. *He* doesn't deserve that.

I wade barefoot back towards the twisted comfort of the dirty kitchen. I feel the veil of dead flowers draped beneath me on the floor. I had gotten sick of watching so many of them wilt a week ago but I couldn't throw them away. Not out of sentiment or anything – I had no black bin bags. Instead, I had to watch them die on the laminate. At least with the curtains closed, I don't have to look at them anymore. I never want to smell the sweetness of flowers again. At my funeral, I want every flower in sight drowned in vinegar. It's much more fitting for the occasion. I want my body left unburied too. I want it to be a symbol of premature expiry – the kind that cursed my house. Then leave my decomposing corpse to pollute the air with odours so offensive even the vultures vomit around me. Then, make *him* clean it up.

Because *he* started it all. *He* is the reason for the spit-drenched cards at our door. *He* is the one who caused this stench. *He* bought the milk. *He* bought the cheese. *He* bought the eggs. *He* never shut the fridge door properly. *He* bought the faulty thing to begin with. *He* would hate the smell. *He* would moan about the smell. *He* would buy the bin bags because of the smell. But *he* forgot the black bin bags that day and *he* isn't coming back to buy us more.