

Her Vanity

The Man lies down, basking in the sun. The waves crash against the white sand shore. The gulls above circle and squawk. A gull lands next to him, slowly approaching. At first it quietly squawks but slowly, it begins to scream. It flaps its wings erratically and violently pecks the ground before its body sinks and disappears into the sand. The Man stirs from his dream.

The Man quiets his alarm. He rubs his eyes and stares toward the window. The frost on the window hazes his view of the outside. There are two mahogany nightstands on either side of the bed, each holding a small porcelain lamp. The Man reaches over the bed to her nightstand. The orange light illuminates the room. He stares at the lamp.

The Man gets up. The cold hardwood floor pushes against his feet. It creaks and moans as he walks past the white shag vanity stool toward the hallway. Through the narrow corridor he walks to the bathroom. He washes his face under running water. He shaves as he looks himself in the eyes. His eye bags hang heavy; dark.

The Man sighs heavily as he reaches for the tarnished brass closet handle. He looks back staring at his reflection in her vanity.

He pulls out a suit and slowly gets dressed. He sits on her shag white stool, slipping into his shoes. He looks out the window, the frost slowly clearing. The neighbors are doing their usual walk. He looks up at the fan above.

He grabs the slender cloth resting on her vanity. He stares hesitantly as he watches the slender collection of fibers dangle in his hand. He grins as he runs his fingernail across the fibers before bringing it over his neck.

Over, under and around. He tightens the knot just enough to choke his breath. He stares blankly at his reflection framed by her *vanity*. He inhales deeply and smiles when he kicks the

stool from under himself. The chair crashes against the wooden floor. Sweat beads down his forehead. His chest heaves for air—begging. He sees the light at the end of the corridor—a warm glow. He walks towards it.

Down the hallway, past the bathroom and her vanity to the bed. He reaches over to her side and shuts the light.