

Under The Veil

A sheer, white curtain hangs loosely in front of the hospital window allowing the view from my second story room to seep through in a slight blur. The outline of a bare tree cuts the gray sky into jagged pieces, the branches sway silently to the breathe of the breeze as if urging me to lift the veil. I creep closer and closer until the tip of my nose rests on the soft material, my breath warm against its smooth surface—

My breath is warm, ricocheting off the white silk and back over my cheeks after each exhale. I'm hiding within my mother's wedding dress while she puts on her makeup at the vanity. She pretends not to know I'm there.

"Where is my precious Rose? I just don't know where she could be!" She says, frantically looking around the room in drawers, under the bed, behind doors.

"Oh, I hope I can find her in time! Where oh where is my little Rose flower?"

I giggle beneath the white tulle and lace until she finally starts tickling the slight bump I make within the soft, heaping pile of her dress before peeling away the material to expose her little girl. She kisses my forehead and holds out her hand—

My fiancé's palms are calloused and I can feel the rough knobs against my balmy skin as we intertwine our fingers at the alter—

I use my fingers to pick at the windowsill, the white paint chipping and falling to the floor, tickling the tips of my bare feet. After all this time I thought someone might come to fix the mess I've made. That the pieces might come together, even if only in a dustpan headed for the trash. But I don't get visitors here. And I'm reminded every time I hear a car door slam shut only to reveal another unfamiliar face—

After the ceremony, my mother places her veil on my head as my father loads their luggage and slams the trunk shut. They're giddy as they each quickly fall into their seats and drive away. My mother turns and waves through the back window engulfed in her dress—

My dress slightly suffocates me, the embedded wire pressing up against my ribs, the top tight around my chest. The low creaking of the pew benches as guests shuffle in their seats, the subtle buzz of the light bulbs overhead and the whiteness of the walls make me dizzy. Only my husband-to-be's face stays stagnant as I raise my hand slowly to steady the swirling scene—

I raise my hand, slowly, pulling the white curtain open. A homeless woman is pushing a cart full of glass bottles across the street and even through the window's frame I can hear the high-pitched rattling as the containers tap each other—

The cans tied to strings on the bumper wildly clink down the road as I wave back, jumping up and down, the veil tickling my cheek. Her smile gets

smaller and smaller until the semi-truck's horn and the screech of impact stifle the world—

The gunshot echoes throughout the church, ricocheting off the high ceiling before mingling with my screams. The bullet slices through the air with a loud clap before tearing through his tuxedo and his hand grows limp in mine before slipping out of my grasp and hitting the floor—

A turning car speeds past the homeless woman as she reaches the other side of the road, just missing her but sending some bottles spilling over the cart and collapsing onto the concrete where they shatter into sharp pieces—

Shards of glass burst from the windows, sprawling across the gravel road. Blood is splattered across what's left of the back windshield and my mother's body lies across the trunk. Her veil acts as the white sheet they place over the dead, only it's speckled with red—

Through the tears, I see a glimpse of his body wilted on the floor in a pool of his blood, which trickles towards the aisle, some spackled across the front of my white dress. I step through the side exit amidst the chaos—

I step away from the window and shuffle back to my gurney, pulling the cold, bleached sheets over my head. I'm hiding in my mother's wedding dress, holding my breath, hoping I can stay there but her smile is shrinking with the distance. *The sirens' screams grow softer with the distance as I grab a*

handful of my dress on either side, take a deep breath, and begin running. My veil licks my cheekbones as I scan my surroundings with wide eyes—

The softness licks my cheekbones as I bring the sheets closer, taunt, burying my nose into the scratchy material, my mouth wrapped against the surface. My mother's mouth is all that I can identify as I pinch the veil and pull it away from her face, too afraid to look at her eyes. *My eyes can't see through the blur, I search frantically but can't find the killer. My heel snags my dress causing me to stumble into the grass where I snuggle my face into the tulle and lace—*

And I don't come out until I hear their voices,

"There's my sweet little Rose flower, there she is!"

"Wait."