

HOME

from the unpublished novel (14,500 words)

by Mark Katzman

mark@markkatzman.com

1

I have the house all to myself now. Mother and father are here but they're not talking.

This will take all night. In the morning I shall finish the job. Perhaps after a game of pool. Yes, that's how it will be. They'll find me sprawled across the red felt with my little ass in the air.

Good. Settled. We can move on.

You look peaceful, mother. I'm going to touch you up a bit.

There.

I want you to look your best. Father too.

Family occasions are so rare.

2

I came home on a Tuesday. It was raining. There was a buzzing in my ears. I think it was a Tuesday. I think it was home.

The car pulled into the driveway and I saw a large scorpion on the roof.

I closed my eyes and took several deep breaths.

The driver opened the door and helped me out.

His clothes were identical to the ones worn by all the male attendants at the clinic: black beret, turquoise shirt, gold sports-jacket, maroon pants, white patent-leather shoes.

His name was Jones. That's what his tag said. He didn't speak a word during our time together. Our days. Our weeks.

I had taken a vow of silence long ago.

The front door opened.

A woman stood in the doorway with bright blue hair shaped like a bee-hive.

Mother?

"Welcome home, M," she said.

Jones drove off without saying good-bye.

3

We walked down a long hallway.

She said her name was Ruth and that she and Henry were running the house.

I was transfixed by her hair.

She was wearing a white uniform with the initial K embossed in black on the side of each shoulder.

Her dress was very short. I liked her white stockings and garter-belt very much.

She wore white spiked heels.

4

In my room. At last. The buzzing in my ears was gone. I undressed and put on the black silk pajamas on the bed.

Ruth knocked twice and came in. She was wearing a low-cut white jump suit. The K in yellow on each shoulder. She held a silver tray.

"Your grandmother is in the room just off the kitchen," she said. "Yesterday she told me the flowers on the kitchen table were on fire. Before that it was children singing inside the closet. Enjoy your lunch and don't forget to take your pills."

Lunch was a raisin-bread and cream cheese sandwich with orange juice.

There were three pills. Two were green, oval-shaped, and very small. The third was a large capsule filled with tiny pink and green pellets.

I took them after finishing lunch. In a few minutes my body was numb.

I closed my eyes and saw a woman embedded in a block of ice. She had long black hair and pale skin and she was beautiful. Then she decomposed. There was a vivid array of lights before I lost consciousness.

5

It was night. I heard something on the roof. After a minute or two it moved away. All was silent again.

The hallway was pitch black. I felt along the wall until I reached the kitchen. I stood there while my eyes adjusted to the dark.

I found a flashlight in a drawer by the sink.

Down the hallway. Open the front door.

The scorpion was facing me on the driveway. A menacing thing several feet long.

I shone the light into its eyes. It began clicking its pincers furiously.

I shut the door.

From my corner window I noticed a light on next door. A woman with blonde hair was sitting at a desk, writing.