

Zombicil

by Joe Lyons

I'm told it hurts. It hurts more than anyone ever thought it would. Every light in the room blinds you. Every sound in the room deafens you. The pain is excruciating as muscles and nerves that aren't meant to work anymore are forced back to life in an attempt to cheat God out of forty-eight more hours. Forty-eight measly hours, that's all you get. Then you're back to meeting your maker. The second death is quieter and less-painful, but it's still as inevitable as the first one.

I've been heading up the Z-Ward at Allegheny General for 3 years now. I went to med school so I could save lives, now I just specialize in momentarily prolonging them. We only use the drug for the emergency cases and suicides, since it's a federal offense to use it for anything else. People are brought in dying or recently deceased, we administer the pill (provided there's enough brain tissue to reanimate), and then we detain them in Z-Ward for the last forty-eight hours they've got, so they can contact their next of kin, get their affairs in order, or fill out police reports. You know...sentimental stuff. Leave it to science to make sure bureaucracy follows you into the afterlife. There's no danger in it. No one has ever exhibited any cannibalism or dangerous behavior. People just come off as slow, drowsy, and confused. It would be horrifying if it wasn't so ultimately depressing.

She was stunning. Roughly 23 years old and dressed to the nines. Even though all of the color had drained out of her, she still seemed to glow. I didn't need to look at her chart to know what happened. The tell-tale lesions from her wrists to halfway up her forearm told me her sad story. It was odd. Nowadays most suicide victims know to shoot themselves in the head so they don't have to visit me and then face forty-eight hours of regret or dealing with angry loved ones demanding to know why they left them behind.

Slitting your wrists; you really have to appreciate that kind of devotion to the classics.

She had a note pinned to the front of her blouse. Typically the paramedics take care of this sort of thing before they come to Z-Ward, but it was a busy night. It was none of my business, but I couldn't help myself. I unfolded the torn off sheet of notebook paper and read her two simple final words, "No pill". I think I'm in love...and why is it more fulfilling than my other relationships? I guess that's the one redeeming quality about my job as a mad-scientist. If there's evidence that they don't want to be reanimated, or if there's no urgent legal need to, we won't do it. It's a last request I feel honored to deliver. Her name was Vivienne and that's all I'll ever get to know about her and that's just what she wanted. Damn.

That's life in Z-Ward, I guess. The zombies are interesting, but the corpses...the corpses can be downright fascinating.

