

Under The Bed

How did I get here?

I really wasn't all too sure. Of course, looking back on it, I could see that this was the only way things could have gone. I had been so foolish. Somehow believing that I had control of the situation, that I had the upper-hand, I had allowed myself to walk blindly into oblivion.

But, still, the question remained in my mind. How did I get here? The existence I was leading confused me. I had followed all of the instructions to a T. I had gone over the instructions from nightfall until dawn and then executed them perfectly. I was even certain that I had completed the mission exactly as they had asked.

Yet, there I was.

The room was usually warm. The room I rested in. It wasn't anything all that special really. The carpet was cheap and scratchy against my back, and it carried a certain odor even *before* the incident. I often heard the guests complain about it.

No matter how many complaints were filed, however, things went on just as they always had. People would file in with their suitcases and their dazzling plans for a great vacation. The smell disgusted most, but the maids simply went on dumping carpet deodorizer around the room. The guests would murmur to each other about how disturbing the smell really was. I heard a few in particular go so far as to say they felt like they were being watched. Which, of course, they were.

I didn't quite understand why though. Why my existence was necessary in that location. Room 5. I remembered that from the instructions. I remembered it well. I never forgot anything, not even the most minute detail. Which is why I had been so good at my job.

I distinctly remember the way the little girl's eyes had grown wide and bright. The way they had filled with tears as she returned my dark stare. She had screamed, of course. Loud and hysterical. She had merely meant to retrieve the doll that had fallen onto the floor, only inches from my hand.

The parents had rushed in, the father heaving as he arrived first.

"What's wrong, Sara?" His voice had been harried and panicked. He was above her in seconds, picking her up and wiping her tears. I watched his feet as he shifted his weight to accommodate hers. The mother's heels thumped dully on the cheap carpet as she stumbled to join her husband.

She tried to tell them, to explain, *"There's a girl! Under the bed! She was staring at me!"*

The couple had set her down on the bed, despite her protests, and got her to quit her sobbing. Then, they had calmly explained that there was no girl. That she really had to get a hold of her imagination before it ran away with her.

She was hyperventilating as she tried to persuade them to look for themselves. I waited breathlessly for them to finally kneel down and take a look. They would be horrified, no doubt. The whole world would be horrified when they learned that there was a possibility they were being watched in the rooms they considered all too private. But it seemed the little darling often cried wolf. They refused to entertain the possibility.

Still, the little picturesque family of three had cut their trip short and left. Evidently finding the smell and the lingering feeling of my presence too much to bear. They never checked though. They were too prideful for that. Too afraid to get down on their knees and admit that something so grotesque was going on, right beneath the noses of the hotel staff.

So I went on, living beneath the springs that would squeak in the most annoying manner anytime a couple checked in. Listening to maids whisper rumors to each other.

“There’s something not right about that room.”

“I swear the lights there are always dimmer than the rest of them. No matter how many times I change them out.”

“Every time I go in there, I feel like I’m being followed around.” “There’s definitely some kind of evil *something* in Room 5.” Little did they know, it was just little ol’ me.

I would lie there and record everything that transpired. Mentally tucking it away for later analysis. For surely, there would be need for analysis; they always wanted to know exactly what happened and how. Who said what and when. Five years was an awful lot to take in, and I was certain that I had lost some things, but I desperately held on to most of what I saw and heard. I wouldn’t disappoint.

I never did. I could read their instructions once and then dispose of the details. I never left trails to follow. I would go to the locations with the weapon the paper had specified, and take care of whoever needed to be taken care of. I wasn’t entirely sure how I had gotten into the business, but I was confident in myself. The company wouldn’t get rid of me; they wouldn’t abandon me.

I told myself I was needed.

Which is why I didn’t understand. Why was I in Room 5? There had to be a *point*. I was needed; they wouldn’t have simply left me for dead. After all that I had done for them, throwing my humanity away, leaving behind the ones I had taken on the job to protect; I wouldn’t be left behind. I *couldn’t* have been left behind. So, I went on observing.

I knew there was a TV in the room; it had been playing for a vast majority of the time I had spent in Room 5. The night of the mission, it had been playing when I walked into the room. I had gone into the hotel, checked in, and closed the door to the room softly behind me. The woman had been sitting on the bed, watching the TV, her back to me. The mission was supposed to be a simple one, but something about it bothered me. It wasn't quite like the others; something about it set me on edge.

"Hello," I called out in the most steady and assured voice I could find.

She didn't answer, and I walked towards her on shaking legs. I reached out a hand to touch her shoulder when she turned around sharply and grabbed my wrist.

I gasped and clutched at my stomach. The blade was quick. In and out. Nice and clean, "Sorry," she murmured, "I'm taking your place."

I had accepted that fate, and didn't really put up much of a fight as the woman's harsh foot pushed me roughly under the bed. I waited as she glided to the door and left. From the hotel's perspective, a woman checked in and a woman checked out. There was nothing to question.

Of course, it had taken them a couple of hours to come clean the room, so they never heard my lilting gasps. I couldn't call for help; I would be taken to a hospital and questioned. Then- all that I was, and all that I had done, would have been revealed.

So I had lain there, watching my blood pool around me. The death hadn't surprised me. What had, however, was that even after breathing was no longer necessary, even after I couldn't feel my heart pounding anymore, even as my skin began to blacken and smell, I was still watching and listening. Condemned to an existence of observation.

I wondered if maybe all people had this problem. That death was just a loss of control over your limbs and organs. That aside from the freedom that came with those things, you just went on being. Existing.

It seemed rather unfair to me.

After being there for so long, it surprised me when I was discovered by a middle-aged man watching the TV. He had dropped the remote, bent over to retrieve it and locked eyes with me. What I found somewhat annoying was that his reaction was even more ridiculous than that of the little girl. Puking and heaving sobs. He had launched himself off the bed and stumbled into a corner far away from where I lay.

A couple of maids answered his pleas for help, and they also bent down to see. I had found it somewhat unnerving that the underside of the bed had never been cleaned, that I had been allowed to lie there for so long.

I remember the way one of the maid's faces had gone horribly white, and she had shuddered.

"I knew it," she hissed, "There was something like this the whole time, but none of you would listen to me!"

The other maid had shrugged almost nonchalantly as if to say, "There's no helping it." I waited, devastated, as the two went to get help. I heard a man I assumed to be the manager speaking quietly to the two. Before I knew it, there were hands grabbing at my arms and legs.

Voices grumbling in discomfort and disgust as the employees voiced their disapproval of the whole affair. An adolescent boy's voice called out softly that the coast was clear.

I really couldn't believe this was the way things were going to end. After all of the lives I ended, my *own life* ended. I was simply going to be disposed of out the back door. The injustice stung, but I supposed this was what I deserved for the havoc I had wreaked all of my life.

The men had dropped me carelessly from their shoulders and started digging.

I watched the stars glittering far above my head as I was dropped into the pit. The dirt was cold as I lay on it. Worms and other crawling things squirmed around me; and I wanted to cry out when I felt the first heavy clump of dirt land on top of my body.

I stared at the stars as long as I could, and laughed to myself as I realized it was the last time I would be able to. Then, the dirt covered my vision, and I was left in the smothering darkness. The pressure built and built and I felt my body crumbling helplessly beneath it.

I had existed for five years in that room. I had observed its occupants for *five* years.

Condemned to existing, but not existing, seemingly forever. The days had dragged by as though two ton weights were tied to their ankles. And in the end, every second of the 2, 629, 745 minutes I had spent under that bed, had been *meaningless*. I had been left behind.

The dirt piled higher and higher, its weight settling on my body mercilessly. There was no pain. I waited until my entire being was crushed and broken.

And then I was free.