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Death (A Tribute to John Lennon)

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Flamm: Death (A Tribute to John Lennon)
 THE DREAMS OF VERNON LLOYD

by John Bagdonas

Shadows fluttered in the doorway. He heard water falling and a warm draft surrounded him; curiosity urged him to find what was at the top of the stairs but he couldn't move. He pulled his shoulders back to throw himself forward when the dream vaporized, and he found himself upright in bed, eyes open and chest pounding.

Vernon Lloyd, 79 years old, had just begun another day at the Silverburg Nursing Home.

Falling back, he propped himself on an elbow and viewed his reflection in the mirror. The deep wrinkles and white hair were out of place in contrast with the clean cinderblock walls and cold, shiny floor of the small oblong room.

As he lay in bed, the knotted fingers of his hand trembled against the sheets. They had shaken with similar conviction seventeen years ago when he stood before the school board to appeal a mandatory retirement. It was a dead giveaway. He was old.

Advancing age had eaten into his wholeness as a vulture gouges carrion. His job, his wife, the house — all gone, gobbled down by a famished scavenger, old age.

The door opened and a woman walked in. Her stomach pulled painfully at the buttoned white uniform. "Morning Mr. Lloyd" she said with an absent tone. Her pudgy hand tugged the cord of the blinds. Bright sunlight broke into the room. He squinted as she stood with her back to the window. "Might you knock before you come in?" he said. There was no lock on the door of the room, nor the bathroom nor anyplace the residents were allowed.

The nurse looked at him without expression and said, "You had better get your breakfast, your daughter will be here soon."

He moved to the edge of the bed and stood. Meanwhile the attendant made the bed. Finished, he joined her at bedside while she laid out his dayclothes. Next to his slacks sat a pair of unfamiliar green socks. Vernon stared at them and said "Those aren't mine." The nurse sighed deeply and said "Certainly they are Mr. Lloyd, I took them from your dresser."

"They never get the damn socks right," he mumbled to himself.

"Can I help you dress now?" the woman said with a hint of impatience. He sat down and she began to remove his clothes. Her meaty hands gripped his arms and pulled on the clothing strongly. "You must be behind schedule," he said.

"If we don't hurry, your daughter will be here before breakfast," she said with another tug.

Denice came to visit at nine am every Thursday. She was his youngest of four children and the only one that visited. The others were spread across the country and rarely came to see him.

Denice had been close to him. She had come late in his life and lived at home too long before marrying and moving out. He knew the weekly visits were a strain on her. There were three children, whom never accompanied her and a husband that protested any inattention brought on by his aged father in law.

Denice always looked haggard when she came to visit. Vernon knew about Denice's problems because, despite his fading senses, he was sensitive and listened to her. It was always small talk, like that exchanged by strangers on an elevator. Occasionally, he tried to reach her with his problems, but she didn't listen. She would patronize him to a point then abruptly change the subject. He would lament over the memory of the close relationship they had when she was a child.

Fountain in a Shopping Mall

Tossed

pennies

nickels

dimes

plummet

dive

for luck.

Rhythmic water consumes,

buries with constant design.

Ripples dissipate.

Women with blue hair & men with juggling pockets bribe fate.

— Kimberly J. Kyp

DEATH

(A tribute to John Lennon)

Time is ended, life is still

It can't be corrected with a pill

Souls are lost, some are saved,

Life is hell in a way.

Drugs are took to escape the pain,

Eternity will still remain;

Life is short and lived too fast,

The only hope was in the past,

God is right in His way —

No matter what people say.

The void marches onward,

and never will end —

For once you're dead,

Sins won't mend.

— Warren James Flamm

A tenseness existed between them now that couldn't be erased. If he aggravated it, she became frightened and her guilt began to show.

Leaning heavily on the cane, he walked slowly to the dining area. When he passed through the hall, the grim faces of the residents bothered him. Nobody smiled until their mind began to go and sometimes not even then.

He no longer had friends at the home. When first moving in he associated with a group of men that ate together, played cards and talked. As the years passed several of them died and the group broke up, each death disturbing the remaining friendships.

They became isolated from each other by the fear of separation. They saw each other from across a chasm of loneliness and drew within, hiding from the look of waiting death mirrored in each others eyes.

He sat at a cafeteria table, his breakfast in front of him. The attendants wheeled chairs filled with sunken, unfed faces to the table and rolled them away once fed. A bald man snored loudly and was awakened. Vernon began to think about the dream.