

h a u n t

Deathbeds

by Bethany Ides

Consultations

Surgeon: With a burrowing camera, I can show you how the entrances are perfectly innocent.
(slowing breathing)
But it takes a long time for the feeling to render.

Patient: Your breath on my ear tingles my whole length, along the tender side of me; I'm embarrassed to say.
(waits for response)
When what makes you cry makes you cry, do you say: What makes me *say* something about crying? I'm having trouble replicating my reactions now that you're watching. Maybe if you distracted me? Inject me in the other direction? When you look away, I'm crying. When you look to me, indistinctly, I am suffering though it's probably just nothing.
Last night I was looking at myself in the mirror, so I could cry just like I'm yelling at myself, except I'm reacting to the yelling & crying, stunned crying, because I can't take the hostility of the crying, it's too strong a surge, I'm recoiling, or to have to see it straight on or it's unmanageable, it's too pitiful. I could cry with the lights off but—

Surgeon: When was the last time you saw something pitiful with the lights off?

Patient: I can't think—

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- Surgeon: OK, so let's keep it that way. All these people crying who are not related in any way to one another or to you—really, in *any* way—except by circumstance of having perhaps cried roughly within the same frequency or radius, they do not *depend* on each other or causally connect in *any way*, so what we're going to have to do is to change the time of that to this, so you can see it. The problem is not *what* you're seeing, but—
- Gasping: The worst part is that I thought you were my "friend!" & now, we'll never see each other again. & now... & altogether mockingly, "We'll never have to see each other again." Just like that! How could you let this happen?????? How am I supposed to go on like this? I don't understand.
- Patient: In the dream, I saw his face clearly & I heard messages about him very clearly. They said he owned a newspaper & a news channel & that he liked to meet everyone who was just beginning to speak English. I had backed my car into somewhere that I couldn't get out & he was helping me. He was waiting until I turned around unsuspectingly, & then he was teasing me with his laser. Like a stinging burning but like a pen line drawn, from the back of my ear over my shoulder, around my waist, between my buttocks, down my thigh...
- Gasping, Gasping: I don't understand, I don't understand, I don't understand.
- Having Been Injured: But you don't remember any of it. If I had been facing you, you would have seen the trying-to-remember searchingly in my eyes but then you would not remember it either, what it was you were trying to recite back to me, that you had set a song to.
- Lover: I didn't mean to, you know I didn't mean to.
- Injury: When you published your dream of Judith Butler, having sex with Judith Butler, of seeing her from behind, her back bare with longer hair, how you saw your own fingers disappear in there, & how I was the one in the mirror of that dream, I know it so plainly, the interpellation of my head thrown back by your pulling harder on the hair of her.
- Lover: (nothing)

- Patient: I got this rash because I was scrubbing my face so hard, using a rock. & now, every time I wash my face, my facial cleansers pool in the spots where both times the blisters bled. & each time, I got the rash, I dreamed that you were realizing it recurs like this, like clockwork.
- Passerby: You shouldn't use olive oil directly on your skin. Unless you're mixing it with coconut oil. Or Shea Butter. Or for keeping the healthy insides, maybe use fish oil instead. Or you can use almond oil. See my face? I use geranium oil & sea buckthorn & green tea powder in a paste with raw honey & bone resin for texture.
- Doctor: See? Your reactions are completely normal! Now put the phone down. What we're trying to talk about is how to get you get better at self-care. Can't you tilt your chin just slightly that way for me? Look away from me for a moment? That's right. Now you won't be needing these rash-ridden garments now, will you? You can just leave them here. I have an extra T-shirt on under my sweater you can borrow. It's even a little big on me, so you can wear it as a tunic.
- Patient's Private Life: (sniffing)
It's probably what happens when I start describing things.
- Doctor Boyfriend: But even if you tuck in your shirt, they'll smell my cum on your shirt, so believe me: just wear mine.
- Doctor Lawyer: They won't think it's cum, they'll think it's toothpaste. Wear a white shirt, you'll be fine.
- Attending: Or you can wear it inside-out so it doesn't abrade your skin. Remember that time you got red on your neck & it was all over your chest? Was that my cum giving you the rash, hmm?
- Legal Doctor: OK, now sign your name.
- Patient: I can't, my hands...



Solicitations

Narrator: & once he left, it was the round of night, the blunted end of the heavy night. Because it was the dampened end of the listened night, or the buried ending in the dead of night. Amid a wind of sudden syndrome...

Radio: {From lips [...] that made no sound(?)...} / {Lips are made then bound(?)} / {Frost [...] lips, (?)man drowned(??)}
(It could be saying anything— it's hard to tell what happening.)

Angel of Death: You think it's easy to be rid of a wound?

Narrator: (ear to the wall)
Just everything, what we're overhearing is devastating. On the other side of this wall: smoke is creeping thru the fissures, a crackling sound like being crushed between the teeth. Overhearing: "They're tearing down houses" & demolishing everything. It's devastating, not yet finalizing, because still *no one* is finished dying.

Lawyer: (brandishing the document)
Do you want to kiss the picture? You're entitled to that at least.

Doctor: (backs in, looking flustered, glancing behind him, sweating)
Don't!... just... don't.

& no one is willing to return to this Doctor's office, but unwillingly everyone is ending up there all the time. In the waiting room are lists—the lists upon lists—about love & lists about lusts. Names for that & names of them.

Patient: Let tears pour forth upon my face, finally.
 (chewing)
 Pro forma.

Really, let their tears pour forth, pro forma.

Begin the sobbing unstoppably.

One by one, however unstable seeming, they're still appearing. They just keep appearing.

Visitations

Catharina Regina Von Greiffenberg: *Entire abysses of dismay and praise open up for me so that I know not to which one I ought to proceed, at which one I ought to begin, or which one I ought to push to the highest and most extreme.... Contemplating this is like that prophet's fathoming at the bottom of the sea that becomes deeper and deeper and finally bottomless.*

Maurice Blanchot: *...the impossibility that willing & perhaps even desire ever cross the uncrossable, in the sudden clandestine meeting (outside of time) that annuls itself with the devastating feeling that is never certain to be experienced by the one whom this movement consigns to the other perhaps by depriving him of his "self."*

Soon even Julian of Norwich will attempt to describe her “bodily vision” from where she is in *her* bed, in the throes of unrest, approaching what she had hoped—what she had sincerely (we must believe that she) *prayed for*—which was to be defined by a pain so absolute as to be unapproachable by any body, that she should be so immersed in it that her death would un-announce itself, or would be unpronounceable, that she should be so otherwise-oriented in something-else as to be *dislocated* from her relation to death, from even the proximity to it or from anything that would hold her in the knowable, in familiar fear of that or for being full of wanting relief from it.

That she should know no such thing, no such relief as to be able to conceive what it is that one is afraid of, anything so glib as an ending.

† Bethany Ides cultivates conditions (presence, prescience, instability, implicature, dis-use, distaste, disproportionately) as processor precedents to portend the pretense & beside that, like unending. That's like making operas, schools, experiments in community, books, interventions, instruments, visitations, divinations, installations, sub-screenal instigations & understudy internets. & DOORS UNLIMITED is a roving vessel for anti-institutional resilient resourcefulness that Bethany Ides happens upon as it's happening, luckily, & w/ others.

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