

Under the Rug

Grady Cate

The evening array of the dark violet sky and orange clouds slowly shifted to the darkness of the night. Children made their way inside as parents called them in for the day, and families began to head in for their supper. Mr. Sanders sat next to the window, drinking his scotch as he read the paper. Late nights, he spent alone nowadays, gulping away the guilt and sadness that the passing of his beloved wife left him with. The thought of work tomorrow made him crestfallen with what his life has become. With a moan, Mr. Sanders stood from his chair and began to head for the stairs. Usually on work nights he would be in bed by now, fast asleep dreaming of better times, but tonight he stayed up unusually late. He stopped before the second step, looking around his living room as if something was there that he was not seeing. An uneasy feeling entered his body. *What is going on here?* He asked himself slowly stepping down to enter the living room once again. He walked slowly, adjusting his glasses back to their original spot on his nose. Abruptly, he was stopped in his track by the crashing of a lamp behind him. He spun around with lightning fast speed to examine the noise, only to be greeted by an abnormal bump in the carpet. The bump protruded like a hill of grey grass, staring right back at Mr. Sanders. With great fear, he cried out in terror at the mysterious lump that lay under the rug.

Mr. Sanders stood over the sink, taking another Zyprexa, even though he just took one. *This must be an illusion. For sure. I must be seeing things. It's all in my head!* Screamed his conscious, or what was left of it. He sat on the toilet seat, letting the events sink in. *Twas but a bump. Nothing else. The psychiatrist said this would happen.* Mr. Sanders wasn't convinced. He grabbed the plunger and headed downstairs quietly, worrying that the sound might draw attention to whatever lay below the carpet. With silent steps, he crept down into the living room, peeking around the corner to get a glimpse of the room, before turning with rapid movement to face the bump. There it lay, same spot as it was before, patiently waiting for his arrival. He shook his head, suddenly mad at himself for worrying so much about such a ridiculous thing. Slapping his head hard, he walked up to bed repeating the line "It's just a hallucination. Stupid me! Stupid me! Stupid me!" as he made his way to bed.

Weeks passed without another thought of the bump to even cross his mind. Mr. Sanders woke up every morning and showered, taking his Zyprexa then heading out for work. He came back, ate, then relaxed in his living room reading the paper until he went to bed. This normal routine came to a stop though after he lost his job. He came home early that day, slamming the door vigorously behind him, almost breaking the hinges off completely. He raced straight to his liquor cabinet downing a bottle of Patrón tequila in three gulps. He reached down for another bottle, backing away into his recliner where he spent his nights reading the paper. Fluttering the paper in his hands, he sat back with an exhausted exhale. He read and reread segments of the paper, trying to let the bad news that just plagued his heart fade into the back of his mind. Drinking glass after glass, he sat back and drank away the issues of the day. An eye glanced over to the bump in the rug. A wave of anger hit Mr. Sanders right in the face. At this time almost anything abstract or out of place was going to set him off. But not this. He forced his eyes away, straining his eyes to read the words on the paper. Another glance at it. And another. His heart pounded hard, for the bump's presence there was just enough to anger him. Mr. Sanders slammed the paper into the ground, kicking over the footrest, letting out a gut wrenching scream. "Damn you stupid bump!" he yelled, picking up his chair and throwing it over his back before striking it down on the carpeted floor. His hands thrust the chair up and down on the bump. Wack. Wack. Wack. His foul language plagued the air as he bashed the bump into itself, leaving divots in the bump. Mr. Sanders stopped, breathing heavily as he threw the chair down to the ground, tightly gripping his hair in the grasps of his hands. He ran off, moving into the kitchen to grab the phone. His hand dropped down, pointing at the sticky note that was left on the counter with a list of numbers. *Dr. Engano (Psychiatrist) Phone Number:* Read the note. He entered the ten digit number, shaking as he moved it to his ear. Rings stopped and started, but no answer. He called again. Five rings and a voicemail. He swore under his breath, slamming the phone back into its holster. *It is not real, the bump is not real. It's all made up in your head. It's a hallucination!* He reminded himself, fighting his conscious in disbelief. His body fell to the carpet, curling into a ball as he began to whimper. How could such a small artifact in his life be so hard hitting? Crying, Mr. Sanders laid down next to the bump and drifted into deep sleep.

The scintillating light of the sun in Mr. Sanders' face rudely awakened him. He fell asleep face down on the carpet, dreaming of escaping this life that very quickly fell apart. He sat up, rubbing his eyes and stretching his arms out, yawning as he stood up from his makeshift bed

for the night. What a terrible night it was. Without any answer from the psychiatrist he sat alone in his home, fighting the hallucination of the wicked entity that lived under that rug. This morning was different, it was worse. His eyes wandered around the room, recapping his night. Lifting himself up from his seat on the ground, he began to move all objects back into their original spots. He flipped the chair back onto its legs, moved the footrest in front of it, and picked up the paper from the ground. He sat down, scratching his neck and staring down at the bump with intense focus. He came to realize this was no longer a hallucination. The object sitting in front of him was more than real. It was in his home, under his carpet, taunting him.

“What is it that you want with me? Why do you do this to me? You were here and gone two weeks ago. Two weeks and you come back,” He said to the bump, gritting his teeth and holding back tears. The bump under the rug had no answer for him. It lay there, watching Mr. Sanders break down and become unstable. He stood up from his chair, kneeling down beside it. He cried, pushing away tears with his hands.

“What are you? I must figure out,” He said, slowly feeling his way around the bump. His fingers began to press deep onto the soft, grey carpet, slowly turning from deep pressing into scratches. His mind became eager to find the object that he dreaded so much. His fingernails began to slowly claw at the carpet, making a gut wrenching sounds as they clipped and bent against the tough inner surface. He ripped the carpet out from the wooden floor fighting to peel it off and see. As he was uncovering the carpet, two electrical waves of energy hit him in the back, sending him forward and knocking him out.

Officer Keen sat in the shotgun seat of his partners police car, fidgeting with his sunglasses while the other officers entered the suspect’s house. He had just recently bought a new pair at the Sunglasses Hut in the mall. He sat, playing around with them before the call came over the radio.

“Dispatch, this is Officer Ainsley, suspect is down in the living room, over.” Static followed, as Officer Keen began to look out his window, watching Officer Ainsley bring the target out of the doorway. He lay limp in Ainsley’s hands, knocked out completely by whatever he was hit with. The suspect’s body was thrown into the back of a SWAT van, which pulled out of the driveway and into the street. Ainsley stepped into the car.

“No need for investigation on this case. He was caught in the act,” said Ainsley.

“What do you mean?”

“When he didn’t answer the door we barged in, guns in hands. We made our way to the kitchen, before stopping dead in our tracks then we turned left into the living room and caught him pulling her out of the carpet.”

“He was pulling who out of the carpet?”

“His wife. The man was schizophrenic. He came home one night off his medication, went a little crazy and killed her. Neighbors called in the next night about a man stuffing a corpse in the floor of his home. The allegations weren’t wrong.”

“Huh.” Keen sat back in his seat, disturbed by the story. Ainsley nodded at his phone.

“Looks like there’s a new donut shop down the road. How about we celebrate our first bust as a team, eh?”

Keen nodded, chuckling as they rode off.