

Lilith Lies

In a discreet corner of an old tavern converted into a funeral home, an urn sits on a marble stand between two tall columns. Lilith is gone, woman interrupted. Did her light burn at both ends? When it met in the middle, did it self-destruct? As of now, only a humble ill-shaped bruise lies on the solid oak floor as a witness.

A janitor smuggles his way through the columns and benches as he prepares for Lilith's memorial. His keys chink against each other as he arrives in front of the stark blackened stain and points to it. Two guests are standing on top of it and promptly shift off the spot. The janitor vanishes into a Devil's door behind the urn.

"She was a lush!" blurts a larger woman, dressed in a polka dot suit. Her hat, purse, stockings, shoes, and even her gloves, are spot on. "She drank like a fish!" Polka Dot continues, fiddling with her necklace. "The alcohol must have overheated her petite physique."

"If fish could drink, the whole ocean would be swallowed," whispers Polka Dot's companion, a mousy creature whose eyes incessantly follow the patterns of her veil from her pillbox hat.

A slender waxy-faced man saunters over to join Polka Dot and Mousy. "Did someone mention alcohol? I sure could use a drink. Lord, no body to view, too charred, what a pity." Waxy takes off his top hat and fashions it over his chest.

"She was a loose woman," says Polka Dot.

"She may have had some loose screws," Waxy muses.

Polka Dot's eyebrow lifts. "She even had an affair with another woman early in her youth."

Mousy pulls her veil further down on her round porcelain face to conceal a nervous smile.

Waxy chuckles. "Well, at least she was not frigid."

Polka Dot's eyes opened wide. "Did you, too, frolic in-between her sheets?"

"I would never stoop so low," Waxy says and pets his mustache.

Mousy is disgusted by Waxy's comment. She swiftly covers her repugnancy by adding to the slaying of Lilith. "She went to jail too!"

"A case of mistaken identity, but she did wallop one of the officers," Waxy says while removing his red gloves. "But I overheard foul play is being considered instead of *De Incendiis Corporis Humani Spontaneis*."

"Stop muttering your scientific mumbo jumbo and tell me how can that be?" Polka Dot insists.

"There is no body." Waxy nervously flaps his hands in his pants pockets.

The janitor's keys chink again. But he is nowhere to be found.

"For God sakes!" says Polka Dot. "I wish he would stop creeping about! Do you see him?"

Waxy replies, "I don't see him anywhere. Certainly, he's eavesdropping."

"We have nothing to hide," Polka Dot says.

Mousy casts off from the two like a dingy from a Mothership and begins to snoop around until she sees a figure leaning against the back wall. She inhales sharply sucking her veil into her teeth. "A statue!"

The statue comes to life when a ray of sun reaches it. It is Daniel, Lilith's most loyal friend. With a dubious eye, he scrutinizes Polka Dot, Waxy, and Mousy. The three clump together.

Daniel fixes on the spot where Lilith's ashes were found. He turns away, overcome by grief. He closes his eyes and feels his drumming heartbeat as the room begins to omit an ashy odor. A sweet fragrance replaces the ashen stench, coaxing Daniel to speak.

Daniel's deep voice fills the atmosphere of the tavern with an earthy elixir. "Lilith had a lilt in her voice. A rhythm all her own. After conversing with her, many would come away mumbling to themselves, wanting to emulate her speech. The best way to describe it: a dithering, a glide, a cadence."

Waxy's garish yawn wipes out the poetry of Daniel's admiration.

Daniel pauses, looks up for guidance and imagines the tavern's sturdy beams as a whale's rib cage. The chandelier, it's throbbing heart. He tilts his head and proclaims, "What if Lilith could speak now? She had many friends from all walks of life as do many prophets."

Polka Dot rolls her eyes and hides her snicker as a cough.

Mousy exhales a long-winded sigh, turning her veil to a sail.

Waxy holds his elbow in his fist while he twists his mustache into a fine spike.

Daniel continues his eulogy. "Lilith was my closest confidante. She confided in me about everything, what she felt, believed and could discern, especially about her friends."

Mousy begins nibbling her nails under her veil. The exit sign above the back entrance lures her. But, Polka Dot grabs the ruffle of her skirt and keeps her from bolting and tears the seam, which makes a popping sound. Everyone goes silent.

Daniel's voice bellows with an oceanic resonance, "Lilith was haggard in the last few months as you well know. She had undeservedly acquired some enemies. Also, she was profoundly disenchanted by her family's betrayal. They are criminals of the heart. Cruel, petty tyrants with small sharp teeth that gnawed at her. She was broken when she had to leave her home. She questioned why human nature can be so unreasonable when such magnificence rests in its wake. Not a judgmental soul, Lilith relished in the differences of all people. She said, 'Without diversity the rainbow would lay deflated, gray, awaiting life to take hold.'

"But, here I see some of the faces that Lilith praised." Daniel softens, and the bewildered tavern-herd loosens. "She mentioned you with pleasure, joy and hardship. Madame Goufant," he gestured to Polka Dot. "Lilith prayed everyday hoping you would get well. She also praised you as quite a fashionista."

Polka Dot stands up as if to take a bow, but then quickly sits as if she was pulled by a tether.

"You sir," Daniel gestures to Waxy. "She enjoyed your lively chats together discussing your enthusiasm about Sherlock Holmes. All the while knowing how you mourned the loss of your Belinda."

Waxy, uncrosses his arms, scuffs lint off his hat, and nods with a hint of appreciation.

"Ahhhh, you must be Minnie," he nods to Mousy. "She spoke often of you with great regard and appreciated all the work you did for her in her flower garden." He lowers his voice to a whisper, "Rest assured, your secret is safe with me."

Mousy melts off her chair like a clock in a Dali Painting, but Polka Dot blocks her with her brawny knee and says, "I didn't know you were planting flowers for her!"

“You are a wicked woman,” says Mousy.

Polka Dot pretends she doesn't hear Mousy.

Daniel leans in toward the janitor. “You sir, Lilith knew how important the upkeep of the tavern was for you. Keeping it free of rodents,” Daniel looks away from the janitor and surveys the tavern, “and other such vermin. For this used to be your residence and with Lilith's help you got to keep it, relish and convert it.”

A bead of sweat ripples off Daniel's brow and splashes onto his cheek, reminding him of Lilith's kisses.

“Lilith chose not to speak the truth. If she had, you may not be here today. She held her tongue, her heart, her poor aching head because she could no longer be the container of such weight.” Daniel tries to quell his vulnerability by pursing his quivering lips.

The tavern crackled with spidery fingers of electricity. A wisp of Mousy's hair attaches itself to Waxy's overcoat sleeve. Polka Dot sits in the center of two squealing chairs, which are statically charging her rump.

“Oh!” she exclaims.

In this galvanizing moment, two vertically challenged vases full of Birds of Paradise plow down, making their way straight to the marble stand where the urn awaits its demise. As the urn impacts the darkened oak floor, it exudes a sonar pulse and delivers an opaque form spraying from the dimpled brass.

Polka Dot, Waxy, and Mousy stare in shock at the fallen ashes that clearly look like an all-seeing eye. They believe this to be a sign from Lilith coming back to haunt them for all their unkindly deeds they so generously speared at her. Polka Dot flashes back to how she lied to

Lilith about her being ill so she could get extra sympathy from her and get her to cook all her meals for a month, even when Lilith was truly ill herself.

Waxy's mind fills with Lilith's red face from a slap he gave to her after she refused his sexual advances.

Mousy is stunned and weeping.

In a twitch, Polka Dot shoves Waxy out of her way to grab the urn. Waxy seizes her purse. They knock-heads and a duet of groans flow. Her stockings tear and one large lump of plump pale flesh bulges out.

Mousy sees that Waxy's mustache has turned gray from the ashes. She shrieks and rips off her pillbox hat and uses it to scoop up the ashes off the oak floor, which reveals the ominous bruise once again. She returns the urn to the marble stand as the janitor stands frozen with a broom in hand.

"It's too late to save yourselves," announces the janitor.

Daniel watches the heap of battling flesh and notices the urn is once again in jeopardy. It is right on the edge of the stand. He rubs the back of his neck to release the tension. He cannot allow another blow of indignity. His body stiffens. Before he can move to center and secure the urn, an elfin hand with laced gloves grabs his shoulder and says, "Let me." It is Mousy.

Polka Dot-still on the floor, pinching together the gaping hole in her polka dot stocking tries to grab onto Mousy.

Mousy buoyantly leaps over Polka Dot.

While struggling to lift Polka Dot, Waxy takes full advantage and wipes the ashes from his mustache onto the back of Polka Dot's fur collar. Polka Dot misconstrues the gesture from Waxy as an affectionate one and goes limp.

Mousy reaches the urn. The joining of her tiny gloved hands with the urn signals a sudden slowing of time.

Still holding the urn, she half-turns to the others and says with absolute conviction, "She saved our lives over and over again!"

Mousy adjusts the urn to its proper order with reverence and faces the group. "Is it any wonder she burst into flames!" She gracefully sits down on the chair nearest the dais where Daniel stands.

Daniel's rigidness releases, his chin trembles and he says, "The name Lilith means, belonging to the night. Exactly where she is now. She lies in our shadows and in our stars."

END