

ROLF NOWOTNY

COMP NUMB LIMB

24.06.23 -24.09.23

He moves like a mirror, and he laughs without a mouth. I don't know why he's laughing, and I think if I knew I wouldn't like it, but the sound makes me happy. Someone in this house is happy, even if he's only ever happy in the dark when I'm trying to sleep.

One day last year, I woke up and my room was filled with pictures. They were all over the walls, from up near the ceiling to down on the floor. I could tell they were his, because they were covered in his big soft handprints, and they all looked like they'd been folded four ways so that they were like snowflakes. Crayon wax snowflakes made of houses and dogs and shining suns and red cars and wolves with six eyes and postmen and dinosaurs. I stared at them all day and I felt happy because it was the biggest gift anyone had ever given me. Mother and father took them all down later that day. I can only remember a few of them now.

I wish I could learn a little more about him. I'm not always happy that he's around, like when I see his chest through the window and know that he's clinging to the wall outside, or when I leave the closet door open a little and I see his face through the crack. But even despite those things, I miss him when he's gone. The pictures taught me a little about how he sees, and that was nice, but the pictures are gone now. I can't ask him about himself because he doesn't have a mouth. His language is made of arm-twitches and the way he twists his neck around and the way the colors of his skin change. I don't know how to understand those, and I don't think I can learn. I want to know what his room looks like. I think it would be nice to know what he hangs on his walls; if he sleeps in a bed like me, or in a pool of stagnant water; if there are lights, or candles, or windows, or grates in the ceiling, or television screens, or stuffed animals. If it looks anything at all like the kind of room I sleep in, or if it would frighten me to see because of how not-like-me it is.

But I can't ask him. I think the only way I could learn is to start to move like him and try to follow him when he goes away. But I don't know if I can make my arms bend like his, and it's getting harder and harder to get out of bed each day. Nobody else comes over to see me anymore. I don't know what to do, except to hope that he doesn't leave, even if sometimes it makes me sick to my stomach that he's there.

**“The Palmist”
-Kitty Horrorshow, 2023**