

Hypomyces

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Hypomyces

by [Sixteenthdays](#)

Summary

[MUMBO]

You know, when you asked me to drop you off, I figured that meant you were going to *sleep*. Not... straight back to work. It's past ten.

[GRIAN]

I just- look, I just need to read *one*, and then I'll go straight to sleep after, okay?

Statement of Katherine Elizabeth, regarding a boarder in her house. Statement originally given five years ago, September 21st, 2017. Statement begins.

Notes

I would strongly recommend reading [Blight](#) for context before this statement, though it can probably also stand on its own. This chapter also takes place directly after [Ad Astra](#).

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

[Click]

(Door opens)

(Hurried footsteps, followed by the rustling of paper)

[MUMBO]

You know, when you asked me to drop you off, I figured that meant you were going to *sleep*. Not... straight back to work. It's past ten.

[GRIAN]

I just- look, I just need to read *one*, and then I'll go straight to sleep after, okay?

[MUMBO]

(Suspiciously) Do you promise?

[GRIAN]

Yes, I promise.

(Door closes)

[GRIAN]

Finally.

[MUMBO]

(Distantly) I heard that!

[GRIAN]

(Giggles for a moment, then quiets)

Um... this one will work. Why not. I'm just still a little... shaken up, from... the library, and not being able to get in touch with Pearl, and reading the old ones always calms me down a bit, so... bedtime story, I suppose.

Statement of Katherine Elizabeth, regarding a boarder in her house. Statement originally given five years ago, September 21st, 2017. Statement begins.

[GRIAN (STATEMENT)]

She really did seem nice, at first.

Or, well... I feel sort of bad about even saying that. It's not like she was ever *not* nice! She was really sweet! It was just everything else that came with her that was... not great.

I have a spare room I rent out monthly for cheap- I don't need the space, and I like having company. It's a small house, a little ways out in the countryside, but it can fit two people comfortably, and I get lonely on my own, so it only makes sense to have a roommate when I can find one.

And last time I was looking for a renter, I got a call from this girl.

She was a couple years younger than me. Nineteen or so, I think? American, also like me. She was... very nice, like I said, but very shy, and sort of jumpy. And... when I first had her over to give her the tour, I noticed she always wanted all the lights on, even during the day. I asked her about it, and she just said she was afraid of the dark.

It was a little eccentric, but she agreed to pay the difference in the electricity bill, so I didn't see any harm in it. At the time I just assumed she was getting away from a bad home situation of some sort- that's what all the signs seemed to point to- and it's not like I was about to question her about

it. She moved in just a couple weeks later.

She didn't have a lot of luggage. Just a backpack, a suitcase, and two big garbage bags of stuff that I couldn't identify- clothes, I figured, or blankets or something.

It's funny. There were all these *little* things, but nothing really major enough to be worrying, or even to stand out, even looking back on it now. Everything seemed basically normal. And she was really very sweet! I had a garden I kept behind the house, and she was really delighted when I showed her, wanted to help out with it whenever she could. She said she'd grown up on a farm, always had a bit of an affinity for plants.

The only thing that really stuck out in the first few months was one night... I think it was November. It had just started to get really cold. She got home earlier than usual- practically bolted in the door, breathing hard like she'd run the whole way back from the bus stop, and she was shaking like a leaf. I had to lock it behind her, because her hands were trembling too badly to get the key in the hole.

I made her some hot chocolate, and fetched a blanket. Once she calmed down enough to talk, all she would tell me was that she'd run into someone she didn't want to see. Which wasn't too surprising, given what I'd already guessed about her past.

She didn't want to go to sleep, that night. And... I will say, it was a very... *dark* night. I don't know how to explain it, exactly. Something about the clouds, or the phase of the moon, maybe. The only way I can put it is that the shadows outside the windows seemed a lot deeper. A lot more threatening.

The morning was as bright as ever, though, and by the time I woke up it was out of my mind. I only remember it now because she stayed shaky for days after. I asked her if she wanted to contact the police or get a restraining order or anything, if whoever she'd run into had shaken her that badly, but she said no. I worried, but it's not like I could do anything about it on my own, so I trusted her that everything was taken care of.

And I figured I had probably been right to, because months went by and there was nothing else strange at all. I even asked her if she wanted to come with me when I went home to spend the holidays with my family, since I figured she didn't have anyone else to spend them with, and she agreed. She got along really well with my parents. Everything was going fine.

It wasn't until spring that things got... weird.

It started with the smell.

It wasn't really *bad*. It was mostly... earthy. Musty. And it started out so subtle I figured it was just last fall's leaves, now that the snow had melted. But instead of fading out with time like you'd expect, the smell just got stronger and stronger. I actually started to wonder if some sort of animal had snuck into my house and died somewhere, and that's what I was smelling.

I asked Shrub about it, and she said she hadn't noticed anything until I pointed it out, but that she'd tell me if she found anything that could be causing it. And there wasn't really much else I could do about it without, like, tearing out the walls to look for animal corpses, and I wasn't at that point *yet*. So I just tried my best to ignore it.

It was a few weeks later that I started having issues with... mold.

Just on old food, at first, like you would expect. Bagels I'd left for a few days too long, a banana

I'd been planning to use in bread and kept forgetting- that sort of thing. They'd be fine one day, then coated with fuzz the next. The first couple times I just tossed them out in the compost and forgot about it, but then it started happening with food I'd just bought. What was in the fridge stayed alright, but the cupboards... some things stayed fine, but others would be rotted through within the day.

It started to really freak me out. It started feeling like I couldn't trust the food, any of it, like any of it might turn out to be full of mold on the inside. If I was worried, though, Shrub was *panicked* when she realized how bad it was getting. She apologized- I didn't get why, not at the time- and then a few days later it just... stopped happening again. The food was back to being fine.

The smell stayed, though. That... musty sort of rotting smell. It was even stronger than before, and I couldn't escape it anywhere in the house. Eventually I looked it up and found out rotting smells could mean a gas leak, which was what made me decide I *really* couldn't ignore it any longer. I gave Shrub a heads up that I was going to call a contractor in to try and figure out what the problem was, even if that did mean breaking all the walls open.

She went... all quiet, when I told her. Sort of- guilty, almost? She tried to talk me out of it at first, said it would be loud and expensive and make a huge mess of the place, but gave up before too long. I asked why she was so apprehensive about it, and if there was anything I could do to help, but she wouldn't tell me. Just... said she was tired, and went to sleep early.

I didn't see her the next morning. I figured she was just sleeping in- it was the weekend- so I texted her to warn her when the contractors would be coming by so she could stay in her room or get out of the house if she wanted.

The contractors came around noon. They started by checking the gas lines, obviously, but they were all fine, and I believed they knew what they were talking about when they said whatever it was, it wasn't a gas leak. So then they started looking in the walls- because they said it seemed like a mold problem, but it was weird that I still wasn't *seeing* anything, no discoloration on the walls or... anything!

So they finally opened up one of the walls in the living room.

All the space behind it was *dense* with... *growth*. Mushrooms, mostly- big, fleshy ones, all growing on top of each other- but also mold, crawling up the inside of the walls, thick and fuzzy. I'd never seen any sign of it from inside the house, but the whole space was... *infested*. They checked a few other rooms, just to make sure, and it was all the same. Mushrooms piled up on top of each other, so thick they choked each other out...

It made me feel *sick*, to realize they'd been growing so close to me for so long and I hadn't even realized. There was mold in the *water pipes*.

The contractor told me to get out of the house and contact a specialist right away, and to make an appointment with a respiratory doctor, because for it to have progressed this far I must have been breathing in spores for months and months. I went to go grab Shrub to tell her we needed to leave, but she didn't answer when I knocked on her door.

I didn't want to go in her room without permission- she'd always been really private about it, the whole time we'd been living together, and I tried my best to respect her space, but this was... urgent. I mean, the house wasn't *safe* to be in. I knocked a few more times, and then eventually went and found my spare key and opened the door.

And... well.

Maybe you've guessed by now.

I figured out where it had been coming from.

She'd been... cultivating them, I guess. The mushrooms and the molds. She had a little compost bin by her window where it had clearly started, but it was obvious they'd long-since outgrown it. They covered practically every surface in her room- the walls, the dresser, the *bed*- I couldn't imagine she'd been *sleeping* in there.

I got out of there as soon as I could.

The house got cleaned, eventually. I had to call in a specialist who dealt with fungus infestations. He told me he'd never seen such a bad case *inside* a house. He said it looked to him like it must have been developing for years, even though it only could've been six months at the most.

She never did come back. So far as I could tell, she didn't even leave a note.

I tried calling her, lots of times, but she never picked up. I don't think... you know, I should be upset with her, but I can't really bring myself to be angry. She really did seem like somebody just trying to survive, whatever that meant for her.

I don't know if I ever want to see her again, but I hope she's alright, wherever she is.

[GRIAN]

Statement ends.

Mmm. Much better. I wonder if I could sneak in just one more...

(Door opens)

[MUMBO]

I *knew* you'd still be here. You said you were going to go to sleep!

[GRIAN]

I *am*, I am! I was just finishing up. Just let me put some things away and-

(Pause)

(Chair pushing out, followed by footsteps)

[GRIAN]

Mumbo? Come here.

[MUMBO]

What? *(Footsteps)*

[GRIAN]

Just... look. Up there.

(Pause)

Mumbo- is the moon... big?

[Click]

End Notes

a rather long-awaited follow-up! i had such a TIME deciding on what to call this one. i eventually chose hypomyces, which is the name of several types of bacteria that infect and take over mushrooms. this is your regular reminder to go watch shubble's empires smp series.

the next statement is gonna be a banger!! i'm quite excited. you didn't think we were gonna just move on from ad astra that quickly, did you?

[the art masterpost for this series can be found here!](#)

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