

The Bookshop

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I don't feel hungry anymore; I haven't since yesterday morning. I guess after a while your body just gives up expecting food. It must be different with water though because my thirst keeps getting worse. I need to do something about it or it'll drive me mad but that would mean going outside; Mark did that the day before yesterday and he hadn't made it more than a few feet. I'd rather die in here than go outside and face them – but god I need something: beer, wine, Coke, anything. Hell, I'd probably even take a Pepsi. This thought makes me laugh. The old world's gone and yet the advertisers still have their hooks in me.

There's a half-hearted bang on the security shutter: they know I'm in here but they also seem to sense I'm close to death because they're losing interest. At first, when I was still strong, they hammered on it almost continuously and I was sure they were going to break through. Mark was still here then so maybe that had something to do with it. We'd worked together in our tiny bookshop for six years and while we'd never had many customers, enough came through the door to keep us afloat; just. At first we thought we'd got lucky, getting the shutter down in time to stop any of them getting in but after a few hours we realised we should have run the moment they first appeared. Instead we'd locked ourselves in and we were now trapped in a room filled with nothing but books and they wouldn't help us survive; I know because I tried eating a couple of pages from *The Raven* on the third day to see if it would ease my hunger – It didn't; it just made my stomach hurt. That's when Mark got the idea of making a break for it into his head. I did my best to talk him out of it but his mind was set, so as quietly as possible we'd inched the shutter up just enough for him to slide underneath before I slammed it down again, and that was the end of Mark.

I've been sitting with my back against the counter for almost a day now; too weak to move. I wonder how many others there are like me: trapped and dying while they roam the streets outside. How many, like Mark, had tried to run? How many had been killed? I'm guessing all of

them. Yesterday, when I could still stand, I'd peeked through the little gap in the shutter. I found if I moved my head around I could see most of the street. I could see where the pieces of Mark's body were strewn across the pavement. Much of his flesh was gone, either torn off as he was killed or chewed off when they fed on him afterwards. I saw two of them too: crouched down, picking away at his skull. One poked at it with a bony finger causing Mark's left eye to pop from its socket. It dangled there for a moment, swinging back and forth, before it was bitten off and swallowed.

A thought occurs to me: it mightn't have been painless but at least Mark's death was quick. If I was braver I'd pull up the shutter and take my chances with them rather than just sitting here, doing nothing other than dying; but I'm not – I never have been. All I can do is wait for death to come and wonder how long it will be before I'm finally free.