

## The Rose's Testament by Rome Reginelli

The red rose is bleeding.

I'm standing here staring at it, and the blood is dripping slowly down the petals, drop by drop, a ghastly ichor flowing down the stem and the vase trailing incarnadine fluid like wax from a candle.

If I listen carefully I can hear it whispering to me. The voice of the rose is strained. It is accusing me, in a raspy whisper shouting out, "You murderer!" and "You devil!" My wicked hand quivers. Trembles. It hears the voice, too. Those thorns, those brilliantly faultless thorns that thirst for blood but not for a midnight's caress, those thorns are swearing at me, hissing a hypocritical harmony.

I take a step back from the rose. It glares, its prickly teeth stained red, like a Shakespearean curse. Her blood won't wash clean, she whose blood the rose bleeds. I see it on me, too, her blood, that bulls-eye of a how-could-you, a beacon to my guilt, an acrid poison seeping into me, setting into my bones. And the rose is witness.

I take another step back. The rose is alone. It sits in its watery prison with its channels of searing redness running like roots through its base. The glass table upon which it rests is black in this light, this crimson-and-pallor scenario etched into its surface. And still the rose accuses me, its insidious echoing voice trapped by the glass door and the sealed windows through which the night moon is beginning to glimpse. The rose screams silently but undeniably at me, and my hand shudders, not just my hand, my arm, my shoulder, my torso... shudder.

The red rose is crying.

I'm standing here staring at it, and the saline droplets are dripping slowly down the petals, drop by drop,

a pained recollection to what was lost as they cascade singly down the stem and the vase.

If I listen carefully I can hear it whispering to me. It speaks in a hoarse elegy of she who is not there but was, she whose house this was but is no longer, she for whom the rose speaks, cries, bleeds. It whispers of joys innumerable, the birds of spring visiting its blossoms, the bountiful showers of May precipitation, the Eden in which it was born and which it brought to this house, this Godforsaken prison of a house, in its cheerful cherry dress bud and its leafy plumage. It whispers of happiness lost, happiness not so unique but happiness no less. It whispers to me that I took that happiness from it and gained no happiness from it. I took that happiness from *her*. And the rose is witness.

I take my final step back. The rose stands there alone, its thorns like spigots for hemoglobin teardrops crying out to my contaminated self and piercing my insensitivity. She is gone, the rose hisses at me, the rose her last witness. I see her there, beneath the table's striated sanguine stripes, her face, that beautiful face which begot its own death, eternally crying. The rose cries too; it doesn't understand, and even as I watch, the last tear of blood escapes its formerly festive scarlet folds. Then my quaking impious hand lifts toward the hueless lunar globe as if a leaf stretching to the sun, and my stainless-steel yet bloodstained thorn glints. And as it glints, that loathsome hand, which could not before be stilled by the rose, is now moved by the rose, and the last I see is the reflection of a mere blossom on the red-white-black of guilt.

And the rose stands testament.