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GOOD MOURNING MARY

Maddelyn Black

Mary woke up to petulant mews. She blinked her eyes into focus, the world a bruised color. She brought her dry hands up to the weight on her chest, feeling the fur of her unconventional alarm, Mr. Mittens. The gray American shorthair licked her hand and started to rub his face against it.

Mary sighed. This is why she hated sleeping in the guest room. The little cat door left by the previous tenants seemed so cute when Mr. Mittens was a kitten, but his food aggression became far more apparent as he grew older. They switched the door from the main room to the guest room, thinking it would be a good enough solution. Who wants to buy a new door?

Then, Mark and she would fight, then he would go to bed first. She would be stuck in the guest room, where the damn cat could wake her up too damn early. God, this fight wasn't even about anything important, just about who would pick up his mother from the airport. Well, really, it was about Mark doing more around the house, but of course, that's never where the fight stayed.

She looked to the dingy nightstand on her left. How early did Mr. Mittens wake her this time?

The red light showed 6:13 a.m.

A deep, tired groan filled the room. Mary picked the brat up from her warm lap and lightly tossed him down on the worn russet rug. It was something she still marveled at. After owning dogs for so many years, the idea that you could toss your pet to the ground rather than assist them down was so strange. They got Mr. Mittens when her dachshund, Lady Meyer, died 5 years ago. That little sausage needed assistance getting down curbs on sidewalks. She missed having dogs. Due to Mark's allergies, they can't have one. Still, he medicated himself heavily when she moved in with Lady Meyer early in the marriage. The old girl made it only six months. She cried when they buried her. Mark held her hand.

Shaking herself from her thoughts, she exited the guest room and used the guest bathroom. She peed, then brushed her teeth—

years of having braces hammered in the constant idea of consistent dental hygiene. There was a pink toothbrush at every sink for her to use. It made mornings easier to cope with after a fight.

Then she walked upstairs to their room. Quietly she entered, careful to close the door so the cat didn't wake them both up.

Mary preemptively turned off the sonic alarm clock. There was no reason for the scream of the alarm clock to sound as if she was already up.

Mary looked to her right and observed the mousy, balding head of her husband. The bastard was sleeping like a baby. He had his quilted queen comforter wrapped entirely around him, a physical barrier between him and the world. Her husband's husky build laid prone. The gentle rise and fall of his chest was his only greeting. She was grateful- she wasn't ready to hear him talk. He should be the one to pick up Lindsey; she was right, damn it.

Though, she would later wake him. She gave the figure a small smile. Perhaps she would wake him just in time for him to rush to get ready, but not enough to be late.

Mary made her way back to the guest bathroom, feet silent against the thick carpet. She closed the door behind her. Mary shucked off her hair tie; her hair remained in a clump on her head. The clatter of various plastic products echoed in the confined space before she grabbed her prize, a soft pink brush covered in oil, dried gel, and her yarn hair. Her hair crunched as she brushed out the long blonde strands as the brush gained a new mass of platinum blonde strands.

She once thought it was so disrespectful that Mark wouldn't properly clean the sink after shaving. Still, looking down at all the loose, broken hair from her head on the counter, she understood. Nothing quite informed oneself of their age like seeing lightening hairs on the white ceramic. She still ran her hand along the counter and sink to get most of it, but she didn't spend any time properly wiping down the counter.

Her t-shirt and sweats clomped on the ground, her leg swiftly bunching it in the corner where her other clothes and linens laid. Mary entered the khaki tile shower as though the place most people greet the day should be as dull as humanely possible. Taking a deep breath, she faced the nozzle directly, closed her eyes, and turned it a quarter way up to the right.

Mary's skin tightened as the ice water first stabbed at her.

While she hated her morning ritual, there was never enough hot water in this apartment for two warm showers. The things she does for that man- and that he would never notice it. She had found that sharing a shower is not nearly as sexy as one hoped, so this was the best option. Resisting the urge to step out of the mist, she forced herself to remain. Her arms rapidly rubbed her skin, and quickly she rinsed her body. She stepped backed, the involuntary shivers of her body punishing her. She inhaled deeply and walked back under the spray, and rinsed her head. Her bleached hair was eager for the water.

Mary exited the guest bathroom, her hair wrapped in a blue towel, her body huddled in a fluffy white robe, and looked at the clock in the hall. The hands showed that it was close to 6:30 am. It could be later; the clock was more of a decorative piece. She walked to the guest room and opened the dresser to find it empty again. Mark forgot to load her up on clean clothes again. Mary wasn't particularly surprised. Mark became very "forgetful" whenever they had a fight, especially if it was about the division of household chores. Similar, she supposed, to how she always "forgot" to vacuum in straight lines when they were fighting. Love and war...

She made her way to the kitchen, now debating whether to turn on the sonic alarm again and set it an hour late. She argued with herself about doing this when Mark forgot to do household things. She never did it, but it was certainly fun to think about. Perhaps, she would when if he really thought he could make her get up at 4 a.m. and pick up Lindsey.

She ran her right hand against the wall and flipped the light switch, which washed the apartment's main room in light.

She heard Mr. Mittens' indignant chirp before she saw His Majesty splayed across the couch, his belly exposed. The maroon couch's surface was riddled with loose threads, tears, and dusted with a fine sheet of gray fur. Mark and she rarely sat on that fur factory. The cat tree remained a pristine collection of midnight yarn and carpet behind Mr. Mittens, precisely as it had been when they bought it three years ago.

Mary grabbed the near-empty cereal container of tiny brown pellets from the panty and put them on the island. Mr. Mittens sprung onto the counter and jabbed his sought-out treasure. Mary headed to the cabinet, where she grabbed a bowl and placed it on the counter. She snapped open the cat food container and poured

what remained into the bowl.

Mr. Mittens responded quickly, scarfing down his breakfast. She made a note to stop by PetSmart after work. She needed to buy more cat food and a bowl to slow down his eating. Mark kept forgetting to stop by, admittedly he never was the one in charge of groceries.

Mary went over to the pantry and grabbed a coffee filter and some grounds, French roast in a bag. Before Mark, she didn't know people cared what coffee tasted like besides stuffy sitcom characters. She certainly didn't think a tech guy would be the one to show her otherwise.

A small laugh greets the room as Mary chased the random thought. Mary and Mark only considered dating once they were established in their careers. She was hesitant when he proposed. She had seen too many divorces to buy the idea that anything lasts, but she had been surprised by the last five years.

Neither of them was invested in the idea of children, something that Lindsey, Mark's mother, would refuse to accept whenever she visited. The constant allusions to biological clocks, as well as Lindsey's announcements about her progressive stance on being a grandmother to adopted children, fell on deaf ears. God, the entire car ride would be her listening to it. It wasn't her fault Mark was an only child.

Mary's body shivered, her cool apartment bringing her back to reality. She looked at the microwave to her right, a beat-up monster of a thing, primarily brown, with its white base coat shining through the many chips. The green screen listed the time as 6:52 a.m. She huffed- she had been awake longer than she thought.

She walked to their bedroom. As much as Mark disturbed her peace, as angry as he made her, he was the one constant in her life. He was cemented in her thoughts whether she loved him or hated him. Oh, how those thoughts were compliments to one another rather than cancelations.

Mary dragged her hand along the wall for the light switch. She stopped in her tracks as the stench of urine hit her before she fully crossed the threshold of the bedroom door. She flipped on the light and stared at the figure on their bed. The once white comforter now had a sizable gray stain along the pelvis and legs of her husband.

She took a steady pause at the door. She held her arms to herself and took a deep breath. She exhaled slowly. Gingerly, she moved

towards the bed. Leaning down, she lightly shook her husband's chest.

"Uh, Mark. Ummmm, you need to, uh, you really need to get up, babe," Mary said.

Mark's figure remained still, unconvinced.

Mary shook him again, harder, and spoke a bit louder.

"Hey, honey. Uh, you really need to get up now," she pleaded.

The man remained motionless.

Mary began pulling at the comforter.

Mary then said in an exasperated tone, "Mark. You need to get up. Honey, shit, you wet the bed. I got to wash these sheets, you need to- "

Mary's grumbling was interrupted by Mark. His woolly arm flopped down to the side of the bed, and his knuckles rapped the sideboard.

Mary stumbled back; the sudden motion had pushed her away. Mary quickly moved back in. She climbed over the nightstand, her arms meet his stocky chest, and she shoved him, pushing his frame further into the sagging mattress. Mary heard the squeak of the springs as she pushed on his chest. She heard the groaning of the moving bed frame. She didn't hear Mark.

She brought her hands up to his face. Shaking him again, his eyes opened a glassed-over hazel.

Mary's knees and calves were slick with piss, and her towel had fallen off. She punched his torso, screaming

"Mark,

Mark,

wake up."

She was not sure when, or who, called 911. She did not know when the medics broke down the door, but she knew that her throat tasted bloody.