

bleed to death." Glenda grabbed her hair and slid down the wall to the floor.

Out in the kitchen Glenda's Mom, Meat Fork Ellie, stripped herself naked and growled like a feral cat, then she tugged everything out of the refrigerator, shelves included, and climbed inside, curling herself up in a fetal ball as the white door thumped shut on its gentle magnets. Ellis called 911, then he hunkered down next to Bob and told his still conscious friend that everything was going to be O.K.

Meat Fork Ellie, breathing the increasingly stagnant air, passed out, then slumped against the door, pushing it open, falling out and into the shards of broken glass and smeared mayonaise and the scattered pickles. She rode the same ambulance as her son-in-law, with a different destination.

The surgeons removed the fork, closed up the two holes, pulled him — after a week of tense touch-and-go — through. A month after he was released from the hospital, sporting a centipede scar on his sternum, two fang-like holes over his heart, his mother-in-law (judged insane) was released also, in a state of zombie numbness from the prescribed pharmacological stew that altered every neurochemical transaction in her brain.

SEARCHING FOR HEAVEN

Institutionalization was an option, but then that would eat up the nest egg — that quarter million Mom had banked from the old man's life insurance and the sale of her old tract home. So the Urps, Bob and Glenda, relied on the medication that made a zombie out of Mom, to keep the old girl manageable. And Bob kept track of all the sharp objects, cut Mom's meat in the kitchen, locked up all the cutlery in a took box under the sink when he was done

"I think," Glenda said to Bob after he'd sneaked in through the back door from the alley to avoid Mom's customary glassy-eyed front porch sentry, "that Mom has gone off her medication." "Why," Bob replied, setting his lunch pail down on the drain board, "do you say that?" "She's been acting sort of weird," said Glenda, casting a nervous glance in the direction of the front yard. "You give her the pills; how the hell would she go off her medication?" Glenda crossed her arms, scowled, said, "I think she slips them under her tongue, then spits them out when we're not looking. I don't think she likes what they do to her; she's desperate to be normal." "Maybe," Bob replied, scratching his jaw and following his wife's gaze in the direction of the front yard. "We'll have to start force-

feeding her; you know, the way the veterinarians do to cats." "Not funny, Bob," Glenda said, as her husband began a weary trudge through the house to check out Mom's 'weird' behavior in the front yard

He found her naked on the lawn with a cooking pot on her head, the black handle pointing to the heavens as the old girl peered skyward and chanted unintelligibly at Orion, waving her flashlights in the same direction. Bob slipped quietly back inside and said, "So what is it you'd like me to do; I mean, she is your mother." A tear rolled out of Glenda's right eye, left a glistening trail down her cheek in its mindless obedience to gravity, as Cindy, the Urp's well-coiffed Scottish terrier, under the influence of the pills Mom had been hiding in the sticky goop of the doggie chow, staggered out of the kitchen, stared blankly at the leg of the dining room chair, then rolled over and died with its little black legs pointing up at heaven.

— Dan Lenihan

Oceanside CA

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