

# Off the Bloom

by Ethel Rohan

Orchid hobbled into the bar, told the lawyer sitting at the counter she wanted to strike a bargain. He swung around on his stool, leering at the other regulars, saying too loud that her name must feel like a knife at her throat, especially the older she got.

She asked if he'd passed a mirror lately? Said he'd the head of a starfish, looked like the devil. Still wearing that drunk, twisted smile, he pulled a black fountain pen from his shirt's filthy breast pocket, and waved it close to her face. His hand smelled of meat.

She needed to sue that doctor who'd cut off her left foot when it should have been the right. Her settlement money would make sure she'd be all right at the end, not tossed into that nursing home on the outskirts of town where even the crazies wouldn't stay. The lawyer made a show of producing papers out of his satchel. That's what he called it, a satchel. Orchid sniffed, not saying that satchels were for school girls.

She struggled up onto the barstool next to him, her foot and stump dangling, the limbs covered in pink silk slippers. She'd sewn the slippers herself, having saved the material for years and years, never imagining they'd be put to such use. For granddaughters, yes, but not this. This and no granddaughters. No grandchildren period.

The lawyer smirked at her pink slippers, said: kind of dainty, don't you think?

She imagined a train with her on it driving through him. He handed her the fountain pen, said she should sign on the dotted line. She strained to read the small print, his rum breath hitting her left ear. The contract gave him fifty percent of whatever the judge awarded. She

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looked hard into the lawyer's face, her son's face. He'd already squandered both their souls, and still he wanted more.

## from pEOPLE

by Matthew Savoca

John washes dishes. This is what John does. He has a job washing dishes on Friday and Saturday nights for an organic vegetarian restaurant called the Orange something.

At the office, one of the Marys vacuums when the big man is going to be coming in.

A man took a walk on a street. This happened at night.

Miguel makes coffee in the morning and mentally envisions each step of the process before it takes place.

Laura consumes a fatty meat product and loses a little bit of her soul.

Miguel spills the coffee everywhere and never saw it coming. He laughs quietly about it later alone during lunch break.

Keith wrestles and plays goaltender on ice skates. His cat pees in the corner of his room when the litter box is too full.

During the blackout, the computer battery lasts almost three full hours.

Whenever Courtney buys something, she thinks twice about it and then does it.

"The laundry needs to be done," thinks Werner Herzog.

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