

# Bourne toWrite...

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## Retirement

by Jamie Moore

She hated the word 'retirement', but not as much as she hated the word 'village', as if aging made you a peasant or a fool. It was shocking they even placed the words together, normalised asylums, like badging high security prisons as adult education centres. Her situation was indeed desperate, but Marie lamented our communal failings, how we simply discard people, sequester the groups that don't conform to the modal masses and stick them somewhere else, away, dimmed, obscured from view. Marie quietly shredded the open day invitation wrapped in Lorenzo's letter, wondering what else gets retired these days; bulbs and batteries perhaps, boxers and bruised cricketers, and yes, even wedding dresses.

She asserted her subjugated pride toward the full-length mirror, the faded taffeta distending toward the browned edges of the glass, the mirror acknowledging the crimson explosions of heat around her face and neck which betrayed the dehumanising effort she'd expended to get into the dress in the first place. That was about the sum of it she mused; anything worn, depleted or simply battered beyond recognition. There was no stewardship of what we already have, only what is shiny and new.

Mrs Hamasaki had explained the differences in Japan, long ago on those mornings shared over hot tea in the conservatory while husbands schemed vengefully over whiskey as lives were inked in blood red in the drawing room. The Japanese appreciated the value in the transient and imperfect, their 'wabi-sabi' culture brought forth care and respect for the haggard, the threadbare and the aged, the lack of parochial display of which eviscerated Marie's gut like rusted cheese wire. And not that it much helped Mrs Hamasaki either, whose place it was to suffer the ignominy of several decades of mistresses paraded before her as if she was the star judge at a dog show.

Marie leant forward into the wardrobe with some difficulty, packed as she was into the dress like an inflated balloon in a hot tub, primed to explode from the meniscus in a spray of boiled skin with chiffon plume. She cast aside the stack of her old Vogue collection, instantly struck by the extreme rouge effect reflected back at her by Cindy, Carol, Kelly and their friends, and removed the shoebox that sat underneath in the corner. She fed her hand underneath the heap of her children's early artistic efforts to lace her fingers around the smooth, contoured handle of the Derringer.

Returning to the bed Marie sat and re-gathered her breath. The old pistol, his crude gift of protection, had never been fired, at least not by her hand, and as she checked the loaded chamber she assumed it would still work. The steel and chrome felt wildly alluring, compelling her to rub the cold metal against her cossetted thigh, then to recline on the mattress and draw the piece tantalisingly up her arm, across her amplified nipples and around her neck, bringing a pre-menopausal frisson of anticipatory heat.

She tentatively placed the cold barrel-end against her temple, pushing the tip with increasing firmness against the fine bone, clearly discerning its immutable force. When she pulled the trigger, would he momentarily sense the forces of combustion, the rush of infernal heat as the round pierced his withered skin? Marie wanted him to feel it all, to sense his abandonment and betrayal as it occurred, to lose all dignity in front of all those invited there to celebrate its alleged existence, and to shower the callow replacement wife in the blood and bone of all the lives left broken by his legacy.

Marie sat up and caressed the pistol into her clutch purse. This evening she would demonstrate to the community the true meaning of retirement, how the casual ease of its malignant designation compels a defining act before that unerring and infinite exit.