

Mr. Finkis: A Requiem

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Mr. Finkis had died. Of this, he was absolutely sure. The man, formerly living, formerly a resident of 28 Mayfield Terrace, was no more. He was dead, quite dead, deader than a doornail in a demolished house. Mr. Finkis' house hadn't been demolished, though, only he had been, and quite thoroughly at that. The house, meanwhile, still very much in Edinburgh, still very much grey, and tan, and bricked, still very much identical to the others up and down the terrace, still stood. He did not. He was dead.

"What rotten luck," thought this man, this expired Finkis, "what lousy rotten luck."

He lamented. He cursed. He moped about, excessively corpsily. He did not take the news very well at all. Death hadn't even the decency to wait until he had gotten out of his bedclothes, let alone out of bed.

"A rather low blow, if you ask me," Finkis said, though nobody had asked him, as only crazy people are in the habit of asking things of corpses and there weren't any around just then. In lieu of his demise, of which he had so foolishly been the last to know, Mr. Finkis did the only thing he knew to do in times of peril: he made some tea.

Mr. Finkis used to be a short, stalky man, with short matted hair, and a short little nose that had no business being on his long, long face. He also used to be rather adept at making tea. So much so, in fact, that people used to talk about how good he was at making it. They would say things to him like:

"This is good tea, Finkis," and, "Yes, please, I would like another, thank you for asking," and, "Good Heavens Finkis, how very alive you look this morning. Also the tea is nice." When he realized that people would no longer be saying any of these things to him, he did not like it one bit.

Tea usually made him feel better about unpleasant things, though this particular cup did not. He had even made his favourite, the one he kept on the top shelf, the one he reserved only for special occasions: Nabob's English Breakfast. He finished the cup, poured another, then finished that one too, but still didn't feel quite right. This whole death thing had put him very much out of sorts.

"What am I to do?" he moaned, as he buttered a slice of rye.

"I was so young," he lied.

"I had so much to live for," he lied, much, much harder.

"Why me?" he asked the half-eaten rye, though since it already had enough of its own baggage, it stayed silent. He continued on like this until he had finished his breakfast, then returned to the topic of what exactly he should do with his cadaverous self.

He first considered calling the police, but quickly thought better of it. Being the only one in the same house as a dead body would look very suspect indeed.

He next contemplated driving into town, though the fine print on his insurance about deceased and otherwise impaired operators turned out to be a bit dodgy, so he decided against it.

He then took to flipping through the phone book, intent on getting a head start on plans for his funeral, but even that enterprise he gave up on as well: it would be cheaper if he just waited until the home had a cancellation.

Thus, Mr. Finkis, out of ideas, and surely beginning to distend from the contained gases of human rot, sat down on his sofa, and turned on the telly. It was right around this time that he began to feel a tickle. He turned off the telly, and listened for it, as we all do. It was definitely a tickle, right in the back of his head. He

had felt it earlier while having his tea, though he still couldn't quite pin it down. It was something just out of reach, a thought, perhaps, something not right. Whatever it was, it bothered him. It bothered him so much, that he turned the telly back on in hopes that it would go away. It didn't.

Perhaps he'd forgotten something critical about his former vibrant existence. He'd remembered the tea, which he agreed after consultation with himself was quite important, if not downright critical. He'd also remembered his friends, though their names and identities were clearly so unimportant to his current situation that none of them specifically came to mind. Was it something about his profession, then? Would he be missed at work? His eyes scoured the living room for clues, and settled upon a big pile of phonebooks in the corner, each still in its plastic packaging. Was he supposed to have delivered those, or had he stolen them? Was his untimely demise some cosmic retribution for a scandalous life of crime and deviance? Was he, the ex-Mr. Finkis, the moldering figurehead of a trans-continental criminal empire?

No. No, he wasn't. At least he didn't think so - though it certainly sounded like something that would bother him if it were the case. Undecided, he resolved to visit the issue again later and kept on thinking.

He got up and paced across the room. He had to clear his head. Something was wrong, but what was it? He nearly had it in the foyer, but lost it by the time he reached the kitchen. He shambled up and down the stairs, but to little success. No luck in the crawlspace either, or any of the cupboards, for that matter. It was then, mid-stride, just as he had made a full loop and was crossing past the telly once again, that he got it.

Mr. Finkis realized that he was being far too active for a corpse. This was not

how corpses went about their daily business. He was doing it all wrong! So dreadfully wrong! Now that he had figured it out, the whole thing was rather embarrassing. What a lout he had been! He blushed. He laughed aloud. Then he scolded himself, because such behaviour wasn't very corpse-like either.

The extinguished Finkis quickly set about making things right. He wrote up a To-Do list that would never be finished and stuck it to the fridge. He carefully upturned his deck lamp and placed his teacup on the floor, trying his best to spill its contents on the pages of newspaper he had laid down instead of on the carpet. He even turned on a few more lights in random rooms in the house, and left the telly running, to give the scene that authentic feeling of 'life suddenly and tragically interrupted.' Last but not least, Mr. Finkis then placed himself upon the living room floor, propped his left arm up against the chesterfield, and set the rest of his limbs beyond the degrees of the living. Satisfied, he closed his eyes, and he waited. And waited. And waited some more. And checked the time. And waited. And watched a few reruns. And waited.

Death, Mr. Finkis discovered, traditional 'proper' death, that is, is quite dull. He did not care for it. It suited him poorly. He eventually made another cup of tea, then returned to his spot on the floor, only this time he set down a few pillows before he did so. He scolded himself again for getting up, and was relieved that his latest transgression had gone unnoticed. He wasn't any good at being dead, but what could he do? There was no turning back now. This was it:

Mr. Finkis had died. Of this, he was absolutely sure.