FLASH FICTION

Polishing Imperfection

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Untitled by Macha Romaniuk

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Let me tell you this: I bet you wouldn't really notice your body was running low on nutrients before you started feeling sick. I learned that from Clara about a year ago.

She was the sixth person at my aunt's crochet club I had visited that Sunday afternoon, going from house to house trying to make a sale. The scene varied little from one house to the next: a living room decorated with dozens of small ceramic animals; a husband grunting at a TV set in the next room; a low wooden table with a white crochet tablecloth; a steel tray with two giant mugs of strong coffee. And, as in every house, a couple of small, engraved silver spoons on the side, covered in brown rust stains.

I was desperate for Clara to take the bait that day and I knew she would fall for it. I felt a tingling reassurance in my gut.

After half an hour of small talk on the big mustard-colored couch and halfway through my tenth coffee of the day, I made my move. I pulled a small golden sachet out of my pocket. With my fingernail, I found the dotted line that marked the path to its opening and, with a swift movement, I tore off a strip of the metallic package. From within, I produced a black handkerchief.

She became quiet, attentive. I left the empty sachet on the table and held one of the stained spoons between my index finger and thumb. I began rubbing it with small sensual circular movements, covering the whole surface with the piece of cloth while we stared in silence. Then, with the gesture of a magician, I revealed the spoon, polished to perfection.

"This could be you, Clara," I said. "I'm here to bring that sparkling shine back to your life."

My beam-mentor had told me to go for the "older, married housewives," and to *charm them* into closing the sale. It had worked for him and his sunlight-mentor, and his lighting-mentor before him, and even for His Lightness himself.

"I'm here because I need a partner," I said. "A business partner who is not afraid of taking control over her future; someone who is special and unique like you."

In our training at an overly lit warehouse full of white plastic chairs, two hundred people had repeated this gospel three times a day for a week: *Special and unique, like you. Special and unique, like you.*

"I walked in here with the idea of selling you this miracle cleaning product," I said, "but your glow is unstoppable, Clara, and I want to share my light with you."

From the leather folder I had lying on the sofa beside me, I revealed a sign-up sheet bound to three carbon copies, along with an invite to a *non-committal enlightenment meeting* at our headquarters. For a small contribution, Clara would have the honor of meeting the bright

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minds that came before me, sharing their gospel of abundance, glare, hair gel and all.

As I reached over the table to hand her the paper sheets, I felt light-headed and sick. The gallons of coffee I'd drunk shifted in my stomach and, in an instant, decided to leave their human vessel. My *abundance* was shared boundlessly over the sign-up forms, the lace tablecloth, and the beige-patterned carpet. After the initial shock, she asked me to sit back and rushed to the kitchen, returning with paper towels and a glass of yellowish, still-swirling water.

"You seem a bit unwell, dear. Have you been eating properly?" Clara asked in a soft comforting voice, handing me the glass. "Try this. It is a high-power nano-particle nutrient solution that will restore you in no time. It cleans your body while invigorating it. You'll see how it makes you feel better."

I drank from the glass and felt relieved in an instant. The nausea was gone and color returned to my face. She put her hand on my shoulder.

"You should come with me one of these days," Clara said. "We have a very nourishing community where you would feel right at home."

And that's all I needed to hear.

That's why I am here to see you today. Go ahead, take a free sample. Give it a try and you won't regret it. I'll just need you to sign this form right here and here. We usually meet on Wednesdays and I'm sure you will love the people you'll meet there. Next week our Regional Mother herself will be visiting. You should definitely come.

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